The Coming of the Tide

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By Margaret Sherwood

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SHE WAS MAKING A SONG OF THE TIDE

THE COMING OF THE TIDE

BY

MARGARET SHERWOOD

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THE COMING OF THE TIDE

I

UNDER the sun-smitten branches of the woodland and along the open road that curved, all golden with dust, over hill and through hollow, the warm air was full of the breath of pine and juniper and fern, and of the poignant sweetness of the sea. Now leaf shadows fell on the face of the girl who was being driven rapidly in a light carriage toward the east, and then the full sunlight of June lay there. The beat, beat, beat of the horse's hoofs seemed to set the world in motion; the quick, uneven wind, the fluttering yellow butterflies, the slow black wings of crows overhead, even the gently floating white clouds against the dim blue, were to her full of the sudden joy of those that move and escape. Leaning back in her seat, she closed her eyes, opening them now and then

to steal a half-fearful glance to the right, where, between dark tree-trunks or beyond the gray-green tangles of a bit of moorland, the sea lay, incredibly blue. This undreamed beauty was almost hard to bear, bringing new pain to meet the old pain in her heart. Once a sudden turn at the top of a little hill betrayed to her the wide horizon line, and she gave a little cry, "Oh, don't speak to me!" forgetting that she had come on her journey alone. The lank brown driver turned with a New England twinkle in his eye.

"I had n't cal'lated to, ma'am," he observed dryly; then stopped, for a laugh such as he had never heard rang out on his ear, mellow, mocking, irresistible. It ran up to clear high notes and down to a soft ripple that ended in a little sob, and it made music all the way.

"I was not speaking to you," observed his passenger, before the laugh had quite died out.

He nodded. "Thought likely not. Git up,

Don! Was you talkin' to anybody in pertikaler?"

"Only to ghosts," answered the voice, half merry, half sad.

"Took that way often?"

He missed the laughter in the eyes behind him, being too lazy to look quite far enough around.

"Very often."

There was a sudden note of sorrow in the voice, that did not escape the large ears of Andrew Lane the third.

"Your trunks 'ull be right over," he remarked, administering the only consolation that occurred to him.

"I don't care about the trunks," was the answer.

This almost tempted Andrew to look all the way around; he had noticed nothing peculiar about this young woman when she had stepped from the train, but surely this was unnatural. As he was considering the problem of a girl with clothes like that, and as

many trunks as that, who still said she did not care, he was roused by slow notes of the same odd voice.

"Blue — and blue — and blue. Why did no one ever tell me, or could no one tell?"

"Air they arter ye again?" asked Andrew, this time turning round all the way. He got no answer, however, and all that he saw was the face of a girl whose eyes were closed. Through the long dark lashes two tears were forcing their way; the lips were slightly parted, drinking in the fragrant air, and the ungloved hands were outstretched in her lap, as if through the very finger tips some contact could be gained with this encompassing loveliness which made pain within the eyes.

"Mighty queer," muttered Andrew to his horse, and he drove on, not without apprehension. Once he had heard of an insane woman who had escaped from the state asylum, and had come down to this very bit of coast, where, after haunting the rocks for

several days, she had plunged into the sea and been drowned.

"But this here one's trunks was all O.K.," he reassured himself. "Lunatic could n't get away with three on 'em, big as haystacks."

It was a solitary road, which seemed to lead to the very heart of some world of leafy, tempered beauty, for June was passing along the water-ways, and all the land was quick with leaf and blossom. A wind was abroad in the soft marsh grass and in the purpling feathery grasses of the higher meadow lands, where buttercups and daisies nodded in the waving green. Now and then across the shadow of flickering branches came the soft gleam of yellow wings or of blue, and once, from far away, rippled the notes of a young bobolink that was singing madly for the mere joy of living. At long intervals, from out the sheltering branches of elm tree or of maple, rose the dull red chimney of a farmhouse, whose doorways and windows were half hidden by blossoming lilac and syringa bushes;

and again, on some green sea-meadow or rocky headland, stood out the rough gray stone walls of a rich man's summer home. An air of quaint distinction rested upon one old-fashioned place in a sheltered cove at the right, where smooth-hewn pillars of granite rock, surmounted by balls of stone, guarded the entrance. A hedge of spiræa, whose long sprays were now in delicate bloom of white, marked the confines of the lawn; a wide graveled driveway, bordered by overarching elms, led to a great colonial mansion, whose white walls and tall pillars gleamed out softly from behind green branches of elm and of pine; and all, perhaps because of some touch of wildness in the uncut grass and the luxuriant foliage, wore a storied look. Neglect, which had not yet brought it an air of desolation, seemed to hint of a full tide of life that had come and gone, and to the eyes of the girl who was gazing at it, window and doorway and threshold were eloquent.

"That 's the Warren place," observed Andrew, with the air of one who would say that even mentally unbalanced strangers should know of its importance. He got no reply, however, and drove on in silence, turning to the right a few minutes later, into a road, grass-grown and lovely, leading across a bit of moor to the sea. Ahead, upon one of the bold bluffs that jutted into the water, rose the severe gray shingled walls and the red chimneys of the Emerson Inn, set in a space of velvety turf, where gleamed the gold of unnumbered dandelions.

The ladies of the Emerson Inn were seated on the south veranda that afternoon, embroidering, or knitting loose-meshed shawls, or weaving baskets of Indian grass. There were two dark brown heads, and one pale brown head, but most of the heads were gray, and the smoothly parted hair bespoke unimpeachable conservative traditions. The pale brown head was bent over a book, and its owner, in a voice a trifle high and thin, was

reading Ibsen aloud, while the very air, as well as the intent expressions of foreheads, eyes, and mouths, betrayed an atmosphere of extreme intellectual stimulus. There was no pause when Andrew drove up with the newcomer. A dozen pairs of spectacled eyes looked up for an instant, but the ladies of the Emerson Inn were ladies, and curiosity was something not to be betrayed. Once, for a second, the voice faltered and almost stopped, as a girl all in soft black, dusky-haired, and with eyelids cast down, sprang to the piazza steps, then, ignoring host, hostess, and the assembled guests, passed swiftly down the worn footpath to the rocks and began to climb over them toward the sea. It was a graceful figure, pausing lightly on one bit of stone and springing to the next, and it moved as if drawn by some attraction too mighty to resist. Mr. Phipps, the landlord, looked questioningly after; Andrew, as he gathered up the reins, touched his forehead significantly with one finger.

"Sunthin' loose there," he remarked succinctly.

Mr. Phipps, with his hands behind him, strolled down the grassy knoll toward the rocks, and then back again; at the rear entrance three large trunks arrived and were noisily deposited on the ground; on the veranda Ibsen went on, uninterrupted, though full of a tension that was not Ibsen's own, for down on the cliff, at the farthest point, where the red-brown rocks met the blue, all motionless lingered a slender black shadow, spoiling the embroidery, spoiling the sight of the eyes behind the glasses, spoiling the play.

"A new guest, Mr. Phipps?" casually inquired the Lady from Cincinnati, the only person there who dared interrupt Ibsen.

"I thought so," he observed nonchalantly, taking the cigar from his lips, "but it looks as if I might lose her."

The girl, who had forgotten them all, stood where the beat of the waves on the rock

came to her as a part of her own being: the very pulse of life seemed throbbing there. Suddenly she stretched her arms out to it with a little sob that mingled with the murmur of the waves.

"Mother!" she cried, "mother!" and then, "It rests me so!"

Into her eyes had come the look of those who have won the freedom of the sea.

When the reading was over the ladies on the piazza dispersed, some wandering down to the rocks, some going to their own rooms. Three took a constitutional, strolling round the house.

"She has not registered," observed the Lady from Cincinnati as they passed through the hall.

"How sad she looked!" remarked the Lady from Wilmington.

"Why, *I* thought she looked mischievous!" cried the Lady from Boston.

"It was not an intellectual countenance," said the first speaker severely.

Incidentally on the walk they encountered the trunks.

"Good make," observed the Lady from Cincinnati silently. "Leather, but with no foreign labels;" and she went upstairs with a puzzled frown. Strangers were rare at the Emerson Inn, and of the few who had come since Miss Black had assumed the responsibilities of Oldest Inhabitant, none had been like this. When she reached her room she noted signs that the vacant apartment next door was occupied at last. It was a corner room, looking eastward toward the sea and northward toward the moor, and was too expensive for Miss Black's own purse. The elderly lady stopped in amazement, for an unwonted sound met her ears. Over the transom came a ripple of laughter such as had seldom sounded on the New England shore. It was as if the very spirit of mirth were set free, and might be expected to fly in over the transom with fluttering, iridescent wings.

"That girl!" exclaimed the Lady from Cincinnati, with an expression.

The girl was standing in the centre of her own room, slowly surveying it, — the sloping roof, the dormer windows, the spotless bare floor, the pale yellow painted walls, the wardrobe made of thirteen hooks suspended from a board to which a cretonne curtain was attached, the twelve-inch shelf for books, the china candlestick. The soul of ascetic old New England breathed from all the quaint furnishings, and the newcomer had never seen the like before.

"I shall love it," she said, wiping her eyes in her laughter; and she bestowed a caressing pat on her thin white counterpane.

II

THE twilight of early morning lay over the sea when the swish of the waves on the rocks roused the newcomer from sleep. Half waking, but with eyelids closed, she strove to win her way back to the beautiful dream that was escaping. It had fashioned her to herself as a winged thing skimming the surface of the water with motion swifter than that of gulls; and the wings were not made for mere flying, but sensitive, full of vision, they let the color and beauty and motion in for a moment of brief rapture. When the glory faded, she crept, in dressing-gown and slippers, to the window toward the north, where the moorland lay dusky green in the dim light, and the far calls of waking birds added distance to the stretches of tangled bayberry bushes and scrub pine, then turned

to the east, where the mystery of wide ocean lay gray, expectant, under a sky of gray.

As she watched, down the dull, tossing sea crept a ripple of gold, and the yellow rim of the sun rose at the edge of the world. Glimmering softly came the light; bright sparkles of dew and wet gossamer webs shone from the velvety green of the moorland, and a longer pathway of light led across the sea. The girl at the window was on her knees, and her dark head was bowed when the glory reached it and rested there.

There was an unusual calm in the dining-room of the Emerson Inn that morning, a portentous, smiling surface calm that hid the profound agitation of the depths. It was not for the well bred to show excitement for trivial cause, and they did not. The conversation ran along the usual lines: pale hints of metaphysic floated out upon the summer breeze, and all the air was rife with quotations from the poets and bits of literary criticism. Only once was the curtain of reserve rent in

twain, and that when George Eliot was the ostensible theme.

"I noticed that her handkerchiefs were bordered with black," said the Lady from Wilmington, who was absent-minded. The Lady from Boston delicately plunged into the breach, pretending that she had not understood this bit of mental aberration.

"But in the case of Tito, you know, the author is hardly fair. She hounds him down the road to ruin in order to prove a moral thesis. A certain lack of spiritual insight" —

Here the door was flung open and the broken sentence remained unfinished, for a vision entered. Clad all in diaphanous white that fluttered as she walked, her dark head rising daintily like a flower from its sheath, came the stranger of yesterday, the dull blue of the wall paper throwing face and motion into fine relief. She paused in hesitation, vainly looking about for a head waiter, for supper had been served in her room the night

before, and she did not know at which table to take refuge. Presently the slim, spectacled district schoolmistress who waited on the three tables nearest the door, entered with a plate of Boston brown bread in her hand, and greeted the newcomer with the air that terrified tardy urchins at school.

"You will find a seat there," she remarked severely, pointing with the forefinger of her left hand; the under tone of her voice added, "You will stand in the corner half an hour afterward for being late."

The dark eyes of the stranger rested on her with an air of delicious surprise; she nodded gracefully and with twitching lips sank into the chair. Thirty pairs of eyes wandered, willy-nilly, her way, and many a sentence drifted hopelessly away from its verb, never to find it again.

"Grape-nuts," demanded the schoolmistress peremptorily, "or pettijohn?"

The Lady from Wilmington interrupted the answer with a friendly good-morning,

and the waitress frowned, — she was accustomed to prompt replies.

As the meal went on, the girl in the white gown behaved under these unusual circumstances as any well-bred girl would under ordinary circumstances; "which proves," the little Bostonian remarked to herself, "that she is a lady." Of the tension in the air, the newcomer, despite her calm face, was keenly conscious, but, aware that in coming unchaperoned and alone to this strange spot, she was outraging her own traditions much more completely than those of her fellow guests, she was quite cheerful in the face of encompassing criticism. It came to her in friendly glances and in kind words; it vibrated through the air in inquiries that were not made. Just once the Lady from Cincinnati ventured near the edge, as the soft vowels of her new neighbor came to her ear.

"You are Southern, I see."

"Yes," was the answer, made with a contagious smile.

"Have you ever been North before?"

"No."

"But you have been at the shore?"

"Never."

There was a pause. Bits from Huxley, and Mrs. Eddy, and Emerson floated through the air.

"Are you literary?" suddenly asked an elderly lady who had not spoken before.

The smile got into the girl's voice and into her eyes.

"I am afraid not," she drawled. "I can read and write — after a fashion."

In the dead silence that followed, the schoolmistress stood bolt upright against the wall, with her arms hanging stiffly at her sides, and openly looked contempt. The stranger realized that where the South would have smiled the North only looked aghast.

"The schools are so poor in the South," remarked the Lady from Boston kindly. "Had you ever thought of the possibility of a Northern college?"

The waitress blushed and looked self-conscious; she was to enter one in the fall. It was the stranger's turn to look shocked.

"My family would never have permitted that," she answered, wondering.

"I presume you have made it up by reading," suggested the Lady from Cincinnati. "Do you read Ibsen?"

"Not if I can possibly escape," said the stranger.

"Or Browning?"

The little look of wickedness that lurked always behind the veiled sadness of her eyes leaped to the surface.

"Browning," she murmured, "Browning? I have heard the name, but" — Here she stopped, penitent. These moments of mischievous girlhood that now and then came rippling into her maturer years always left her with a sense of regret.

Horror smote the room; no one ordered any more food, for desire failed. Conversation flagged, and one by one the guests

slipped away, leaving the daughter of the South sitting helplessly between a cup of pale brown coffee and a generous slab of dark brown bread. She touched the sodden, resisting surface of the latter with her fork, delicately, and retreated, to answer the call of the sea, whose sun-flecked waters gleamed from far through the open windows. Outside she forgot: forgot her hunger, and the hard little bed which had seemed devised as a punishment for sin; forgot her great trunks and the thirteen hooks suspended humorously, it seemed to her, from the board. Had all these pink wild roses bloomed here yesterday? she asked herself, as she saw them stretching in masses along the cliff, broken by gray, lichen-grown rock, by the fresh fronds of young sumac, and by dark juniper with its new shoots as pale as green sea foam. Surely they must have been here, and the tangled blackberry vines must have been growing in this same wild way, and the fragrance must have been then as sweet as

now, but she had not known it, forgetting all things near in her escape to the vastness of the sea. She climbed again over the rocks, dressed most inappropriately, as the spectators from the piazza truthfully remarked, and hid herself for the entire morning in a deep cleft where she could see and hear and feel. The glorious, oncoming great green waves broke rhythmically below her as the tide came in, and they brought a sense of the washing of old sorrow out of the soul. Listening to their mighty beating on the rocks, she paused in reverent wonder, murmuring: —

"To think that I never knew before that the earth is set to music!"

There was consternation at one o'clock when the stranger failed to appear at dinner.

"She is certainly erratic," remarked an elderly spinster, who was undoubtedly Somebody from Somewhere.

"But is n't she a beauty!" said the young woman with pale brown hair. "I 've never

seen such glorious eyes, and her mouth looks as if she had stolen it from some old picture."

It was the Lady from Cincinnati who voiced, in a whisper, the long-suppressed criticism of the assembly.

"*I* think that we should be a little careful. In all the years I have been here I've never seen anything that looked improper."

The Lady from Boston bravely took up the glove thus thrown down; there had been many an encounter between these two.

"It seems to me that we ought to make her one of us. It is evident from what she said this morning about Browning" — the voice sank a little here — "that she is very ignorant. We could do a great deal for her this summer by guiding her thought into right channels and suggesting standards."

The stranger, coming in from the rocks sunburned, disheveled, with eyes alight with life and fire, heard the last sentence of this conversation as the guests strolled out into the hall.

"Surely," the Lady from Cincinnati was saying (she was accustomed to the last word), "unless something were wrong that girl would have registered by this time. She has clothes enough for an actress, and beauty enough to excite suspicion anywhere."

A dimple quivered in the newcomer's left cheek. She slowly crossed the hall, and, taking up the public pen, wrote her name in the register with a generous scrawl. The dark eyes were full of mischief as she went upstairs to make ready for her late dinner; but the look changed to apprehension as she thought of facing the sternest of maids. Downstairs the Lady from Wilmington, carelessly approaching the open page, read half aloud: "Miss Frances Wilmot, Richmond, Virginia."

"Miss Frances Wilmot," gasped the reader. "Wilmot is a great name in Virginia, a very great name indeed."

That afternoon the Lady from Boston, still ignorant of the stranger's name and

address, openly adopted her, spreading over her the protection of her dove-gray wings. She showed her all her pet crannies in the rocks; she gently suggested — as the girl's muslin flounces caught on bits of flinty stone — that a short tweed skirt would be useful.

"We do not dress much here, my dear," she said; and the Southern girl involuntarily glanced at her new friend's cotton blouse and serge skirt, with a feeling that the remark was in some way tautological.

Gently the little lady led the conversation into improving paths, incidentally alluding to lectures that she had heard, and to reading courses that she had put herself through. The girl listened to it all, and, though now and then her rebellious lips would twitch with amusement, her eyes were soft with a sense of the kindness shown. Sometimes, when the speaker herself felt that the atmosphere was growing too oppressive intellectually, she glided into anecdotes of the

countryside, to be rewarded by a sudden flash of keen interest in her listener's eyes, for all human story was dear to the girl.

"This is such a rare bit of country; the summer people have not found it out, and if they had, they could not come. There are some great estates left about here, and people who have held the land more than two hundred years live on them. Did you notice a large, white colonial house with a stone gateway just beyond the turning as you came in?"

"Yes," answered the Southern girl.

"That is the Warren place; it is very beautiful, and it is very, very old. The original Paul Warren came over in 1645 from Devonshire with a single servant from his father's house, and he worked and cleared the forest and fought the Indians until a great tract of land was given him by the Crown for special services, — thousands of acres. It has been an important family ever since, and the present owner still lives here,

though he spends his winters in Boston with his wife. He has a brother who stays here all the time, Mr. Peter Warren, an extremely eccentric character. Joining the Warren place is the old Bevanne estate. Look, and you can see the ragged locust trees just over the top of the little hill. The Bevannes are another old family, but one that has grown poor, perhaps fortunately for us, for they sold Mr. Phipps the land on which the Emerson Inn is built, and but for them we might never have known this lovely bit of shore. The son of that family is a college professor somewhere. Oh, it is very good stock in both cases;" and the little Lady from Boston, who knew good stock and was of it, drew her protégée away to see a special bed of wild pink honeysuckle which had been her delight for seven consecutive years, and forgot old families for a time.

When they came back, breathless from climbing a steep bit of rock, they found a group assembled on the piazza round an odd

little man in a white flannel suit and Panama hat. Out of the queer, wizened, wrinkled face, deep-set blue eyes shone with one of the lesser orders of intelligence, and the motions of face and hands betokened a mind ceaselessly, aimlessly alert. He was talking rapidly, and the assembled hearers bent their heads with the usual deference of spinsterhood for man, however small.

"There is Mr. Peter Warren now!" exclaimed the Lady from Boston. "Shall I present him to you?"

"Don't, don't interrupt him," begged the girl, lifting a warning hand, and the two stood unobserved on the steps while the shrill voice went on.

"Curious thing, heredity. Now I suppose you think you know all about it, but you can't, possibly. Nobody does who does n't know me."

"Indeed," said an amused voice.

"Fact," asserted Mr. Peter Warren, slapping his knee. "Listen!" and his voice sank

to a mysterious whisper. "I am different from all other people who breathe. You will say that a man is the sum of his ancestors, that is, the blood, nerves, and brain he has inherited from them all are intermingled. He is no one of them; he is the result of all. A certain balance is kept because the different ingredients counteract one another. Now hear this: *I am all my ancestors in succession.* No drop of blood, no nerve fibre that I have inherited from any one of them is mingled with any other. When one personality rules me it rules me completely, and I am always at the mercy of the ancestor who enters me last. How do I know? From the complete contrariety of my impulses. Why, when I was a child, would I be lying one minute on the floor, smiling and happy, the next, biting in fury and screaming?"

"Were you?" asked an amazed feminine voice. "I cannot imagine it."

He nodded solemnly. "Once, when I was a youngster, I remember spending two hours

nursing a hurt blue-bottle fly. I was my mother then, I think, and she was one of the saints of the earth. That very morning I went out and killed my pet dog. Something drove me to it, — many people would say it was the devil; I say it was my great-great-grandfather Warren, who was rather a brute. That murderous impulse, which I remember as perfectly as if it had come to-day, was simply his spirit entering in. Then there is my — my taste for good wine; I can no more help that than I can help having two arms and two legs. It was settled for me long before I was born. In fine," he concluded, with a theatrical gesture of his arms, "I am not the resultant of my ancestors: I am their victim. How else," and he touched his chest, "can you account for the acts of this singular mechanism which calls itself Peter Warren, and whose acts seem so illogical interpreted in the narrower way?"

In the impressive pause which followed these words, the speaker caught sight of the

listeners standing on the steps, and rose with a gallant bow.

"There is nothing so interesting as human nature," he observed, smiling, as the Lady from Boston murmured his name by way of introduction. "And where does one know human nature so well as in one's self? Little, after all, is of supreme concern to man except himself. Don't you think so?" he added, looking toward the girl.

The answer came quickly in her soft Southern voice. "I have seen many things that would make me believe it."

Mr. Peter Warren very soon took his departure, with many polite bows and graceful little speeches. As his hostesses remarked afterward, his manner belonged to the old school. He must hasten home, he observed in parting, for his brother was ill, very ill, and might need him. A little chorus followed him as he went strolling down the road with his great cane. "Is n't he odd!" said one. "Is n't he original!" said another. "Such interest-

ing theories!" said a third. But the girl with pale brown hair whispered lightly in Frances Wilmot's ear, having seen the amazement in the newcomer's eyes, "He 's just a harmless sort of lunatic, *I* think."

It was late afternoon when they let her go, and, escaping, she wandered along a path at the top of the cliffs to a point where the rocks, parting, left space for a kind of amphitheatre guarding a curving sand beach. Tall, soft grass, chased by the sea wind, waved on its steep slope; and buttercups and dandelions, long of stem, nodded there. The girl nestled down among the grasses, watching the mighty actor, the sea, playing his eternal play over the dark rocks beyond the beach; and she sighed deeply as for weariness, so many different kinds of wonder had been crowded into one day! Wide and infinitely blue the water stretched out before her, the outermost rim of the sea meeting the pearly blue of the sky in a line that seemed to ring the world.

"No poet has told its beauty; perhaps no poet could," she murmured to herself. "Rossetti's

> As the cloud-foaming firmamental blue
> Rests on the blue line of a foamless sea

is too much like the tracing of a graven tool to let the sea's life in. Swinburne has caught the color and the motion, but he could not reach the soul of you. Oh, if Swinburne had not been Swinburne, what sealike poems he might have written!"

Sunset came and found her there, watching the faint flush across the eastern sky, and the golden light gleaming on one far white sail, and on the nearer outspread wings of one white gull. Twilight gathered, and still she lingered, for long grasses touched face and hand in friendly fashion; cool damp air gently caressed cheek and forehead, and the soft, immemorial swish of the water roused a sense as of something within her beating back to the very beginning of time. One by one along the shore, as darkness

deepened, golden lights gleamed out beyond gray water and dim rocks, while all about her hylas and softly singing creatures of summer nights piped to the music of the sea.

III

THE wide, old-fashioned hall of the Warren house was open to the night, and through the great double doors, flung open at each end, the stars were shining. The breeze that blew gently through, making the candles on the mantel over the huge fireplace flicker, brought with it murmurs of the shore, where the waves were breaking heavily at the turning of the tide. The air was full of the soft sounds of a summer night, the low, sweet love-songs of unnumbered tiny creatures calling to one another in the dark. Scarcely louder, came from the bedroom at the left of the hall the sound of whispered prayers, for the master of the house lay dying in the great four-posted mahogany bed, and his wife, kneeling at the bedside with the single candle on the little table flaming above her beauti-

ful gray head, was reading prayers for the visitation of the sick. The nurse sat silent in the corner; there was nothing to be done now, save wait the great inevitable moment. Outside in the hall the son of the house was walking softly up and down through the darkness and the faint light of the wind-blown candles; his step was measured and slow, with a suggestion of suppressed agitation. The face, when the dim rays half lighted it in the darkness, showed the deadly calm that often covers, in strong natures, passionate excitement. Upon it the shadows of night met the shadow of coming sorrow.

"Peace be to this house, and to all that dwell in it," repeated the sweet, tremulous voice of the kneeling woman. "Remember not, Lord, our iniquities, nor the iniquities of our forefathers; spare us, good Lord, spare thy people"—

When the voice ceased, there was silence in the house, save for the sick man's laboring breath, and the faint melodies that came

from out of doors. Paul Warren stopped abruptly in his walk, looking out at the golden stars that shone through the eastern door, then at those that shone from the west, with the wide darkness beyond, and his expressive face changed with a sudden sense of the likeness of all this to human life, the little, roofed-in space between two infinites.

"Paul, come; he wants you," said his mother's voice in a quick whisper.

A swift spasm of pain passed over the young man's face as he entered the death chamber; it was hard to witness the helpless suffering of the strong. Propped on huge, old-fashioned pillows lay his father, his grand physique emphasizing the pathos of this moment of supreme weakness. Head, arms, and shoulders were of noble proportions, but the eyes were dim and the great muscles powerless. The face, with its bold forehead and fine, deep eyes, was that of one who had known the thick of the conflict; scars of strong passions were visible; there was also,

not yet relaxed, a certain dominant control of the firm mouth, partly hidden under the flowing gray beard.

"Paul!" murmured the dying lips. "Is that Paul?"

"Yes, father." The young man's voice was less steady than that of the older one.

John Warren's wasted eyelids were lifted, as far as he could lift them, and there was silence, while father and son looked at each other. In the awfulness of the moment the veils of life were drawn away; even in this supreme hour the two, who had said so little and had felt so much, shrank from the exposure as their naked souls met face to face. It was only for an instant, for the sense of slipping, slipping, left no time for pause, and the shyness of a lifetime was broken.

"Paul," came the broken voice, "take care of your mother."

The young man knelt and laid his hand upon his father's; despite a profound affec-

tion there had not been so much of a caress between these two for years.

"I will," he answered, in a voice whose very strength betrayed its weakness.

"I — have n't — always — made — out to be — myself," came the faltering voice of the sick man; but his wife was on her knees by his side, sobbing, with her face buried in the bed-clothes.

"Oh yes, you have, you have!" she cried, with that tender mendacity with which we meet the failures of the dying and the dead.

The emotional strain of the situation was too much for the man who was finding his way to death's door. His grim sense of humor had never left him in life; it did not leave him now.

"Keep your — Uncle Peter here — as long — as you can stand it, and let — him talk — about himself as — much as he — wants to."

A gleam came into Paul's eyes. These two had never yet seen the day when they

could not smile together; they smiled together for the last time now, for a faint flicker passed over the dying man's face and was reflected in the son's.

"I will," he promised, pressing his father's hand, "and I will listen."

The kneeling woman trembled with a little shiver of non-comprehension that had often come over her in listening to her husband and her son.

"Be a good boy," the fading lips said, and there was a touch of pressure from the weak old hand. Paul Warren gave one great dry sob.

"And fight — fight Bevanne."

"Oh, John," moaned his horrified wife, lifting her face from the sheet that was wet with her tears, "not now! Don't talk like that!"

A wave of color swept over the dying man's face; the muscles of his arms swelled a little, and the veins of his forehead, so sunken a minute before, knotted for a mo-

ment almost in the old way; then the blood receded, leaving them more hollow than before.

"Yes, fight him, — watch out for him — and all his — brood. They are — slippery as rattlesnakes. I — wanted to — have it out with him — before I went."

"But, John," pleaded Mrs. Warren, "he is dead; he has been dead twenty years."

Her husband's eyes looked questioningly at her.

"So he is, — I keep — forgetting. Look out — for the young one — then. Young rattlesnakes — are just as — poisonous — as old ones."

A great sense of wonder swept over Paul Warren at this sudden revelation of hatred which had smouldered, unknown to him, in his father's breast for all these years, and with it came envy of the nature that could hate in this strong way.

"Don't think of such dreadful things now," begged Emily Warren. "Do you

know, do you understand, John, where you are? That you are — dying?" The wavering voice broke into sobs.

"I know, Emily," said the old man simply. "I am not afraid."

"Are you sure?" she pleaded, — "I have sometimes been fearful, you are so irregular about going to church, — are you sure you believe in God?"

"Yes," said John Warren grimly from his pillow. "Who would n't — that had any sense?"

Hardly knowing what he did, Paul Warren flung open the windows of the room. Somewhere, long ago, he had read of a people who set doors and windows wide that the souls of the dying might be set free to join the great procession of the dead, always sweeping, sweeping through the air. To the tensely strained ears it almost seemed as if, through the murmur of wind and of sea, he could hear the coming of that great train; and at the centre of his being was a bewil-

dered sense of great doors opened wide, at whose threshold he paused, shrinking, unable to go farther. Suddenly, with a bound and a rush, a huge dark object came leaping into the room. Mrs. Warren screamed aloud in terror, and even Paul started, for his tear-dimmed eyes refused to do him service; but the dying man smiled feebly on his pillow.

"It 's — only — Robin," he said, weakly lifting up a hand and groping blindly for the familiar touch. A minute later the great collie's head was lying in it, the dog's heart beating in quick throbs as he whimpered out his joy at finding him from whom he had so long been shut away. A broken rope at his throat showed how mighty were the bonds he could break for love of the master who lay dying.

"Take him away, Paul," said Mrs. Warren, who stood trembling.

Paul shook his head; he could not do it while that look of satisfaction was on his father's face. The candles flickered and sput-

tered; they, too, were burning low. The young man shaded his eyes with his hand, for the pain of looking had grown intolerable, and so they waited, at the ebbing of the tide.

A rough, bearded face appeared shortly after at the window, and a great voice whispered: —

"Is Robin here? He 's broke loose."

"Come and take him away," said the mistress of the house.

Tiptoeing, the man entered the room and laid his hand on the dog's collar. It was Andrew Lane the second, the farmer who had charge of the place.

"Come, Robin; come, Robin," he said, gently pulling at the rope.

A low growl was the result, becoming louder and more menacing as the man held on. The dog's head lay still in his master's grasp, and into the animal's eyes came a dangerous gleam, breaking their soft love-light. Andrew fell back, dropping the rope.

"Go, Robin," begged the mistress.

The great beast did not stir.

"Go out, Robin," said Paul Warren sternly; the dog only growled.

Then the sick man moved, and his breath came in quick gasps.

"Go, Robin," he commanded, raising his head; then he fell back and died.

The dog slunk broken-heartedly out into the hall, obeying the last command he was ever sure was right; brushed, growling, past the doctor, who had come too late, and ran out into the darkness.

An hour later Paul Warren was again pacing the great dark hall, while subdued sounds came from his father's chamber, where the last services were being done for the dead. Weeping, through the dusk, came the old colored cook, Aunt Belinda, her hands full of red roses with their leaves damp with dew.

"Now, Mas'r Paul, you go 'long and rest, and don't you take it so hard," she said in

her deep, rich voice. "I just goin' in to lay dese by old Mas'r. He did n't care nuffin fur 'em when he was alive, but I reckon he knows better now;" and she passed on in a glow of color to the death chamber.

A poignant sense of encompassing mystery, and of the life that was quick all about in the cool night air, shot through him as swift pain. Lifting his eyes now and then, as he walked, with his head bent and his hands clasped behind him, he saw a splendid white moth flutter in at the western door, and, flying uncertainly, float out toward the great stars in the east. The young man watched it with passionate question and wonder and grief written on his face, making it even more of an enigma than it had been before.

IV

"I CERTAINLY am surprised," said Uncle Peter cheerily one morning, as he ate his oatmeal from a blue Japanese bowl with an old-fashioned silver spoon marked "A;" "I certainly am surprised. I always expected to go first, with my heart weakness. Now, your father had nothing the matter with his heart, had he? If he had, I never knew it; but then, John kept everything pretty close."

"Not so far as I know," answered Paul from behind his newspaper, wondering how soon his mother would come down and break up this tête-à-tête.

"I got it from my great-grandmother Anne," pursued Uncle Peter, laying his hand upon his heart, "that, and my love of beauty, and this set of silver spoons. That sideboard was hers, too. She gave it to my father and

he left it to John, as he did nearly everything. Now John is dead and it is all yours. Well, well, well! And it seems only yesterday that you were in knickerbockers."

He bestowed a congratulatory smile upon his nephew, who scowled and held the newspaper before his face. Even Uncle Peter should know better than this! It was only a week since John Warren had been laid to rest in the little family cemetery by the sea, and to his son the sense of possession in turf and tree and wide shore line brought keenest hurt.

"Don't want to talk, eh!" said the older man smilingly, as he sat with his head tipped a little to one side and watched his nephew. "Now, I always do; get that from my grandfather on my mother's side, Peter Finch. I was named for him, and inherited his sociability; queer nobody else did."

The young man read on, and Uncle Peter chattered to the coffee pot, while the June sunlight streamed in through the rose vines,

now in deep red bloom, shading the windows toward the east, and across the dewy grass of the lawn, where elm and pine cast shadows, always longest in early morning. It was a large room, with paneled walls and high ceiling, and all its furnishings were in keeping with its long lines. At one side stood a huge mahogany sideboard, filled with old blue china; an enormous mahogany sofa stretched halfway across one end of the room; the dining-table, of the same dark wood, daintily polished so that it reflected the faces of the two men as they bent over it, was massive and unwieldy, as were the chairs at its side. Even the plates and the tablespoons seemed larger than human use requires; yet the room, with all that it contained, had a certain dignity, and bore witness to the strength of the race, with its love of strong things. Two or three badly painted ancestral portraits in tarnished gilt frames upon the walls reflected, almost in despite of the painter, something of the family character; and Paul

Hollis Warren, seen in full light, seemed a not unworthy inheritor of the family traits and possessions. He was a tall man, slender and sinewy, with quiet movements and firm-lipped mouth. Nothing save the sudden flash of the dark gray eyes, or the wistful look that sometimes crept into them, betrayed the drama of an inner life. Generations of Puritan self-control and self-repression had left their stamp upon the fine, thin face, young but worn by the elder experiences of the race, and wearing a melancholy seriousness which was broken now and then by a cynic mirthfulness akin to tears.

It was only Uncle Peter who was out of harmony with the character of things in the great dining-room. Seated in his massive-armed chair, he suggested a figure of a man done, with a touch of caricature, in porcelain or in sugar candy.

"Looks like the play doughnut you makes sometimes for the chillen wen you tia'd of makin' rale doughnuts," once said Aunt Be-

linda, the colored cook. "Like 's not that 's what the Lo'd done with the Warrenses wen he got tia'd of makin' rale Warrens."

Uncle Peter rose, and, going to the sideboard, produced a tall bottle, from which he poured a quantity of fluid into a glass. This, mixed with a small amount of water, he drank off slowly, with much smacking of his thin lips.

"Indigestion, Paul," he explained apologetically. "Something I believe you never have. A drop of whiskey does me a world of good; it was born in me, you know; came down from my great-great-grandfather Warren, your great-great-great-grandfather, you know."

"From all I 've heard," said Paul Warren, looking up, "it would be just as well to let my great-great-great-grandfather Warren die out."

"Impossible!" said Uncle Peter from the sideboard, shaking his finger at his nephew. "You 'll discover some day that you can't

let your ancestors die out, and wherever you go, you will find they have been there before you. Now great-great-grandfather Warren led a gay life; I've a streak of that in me; I wish to goodness you had! I wish you would brighten up the old place, now it's yours, and bring gay young people here, the 'sound of revelry by night,' you know, and all that. Come, boy, you're twenty-seven, — or is it twenty-nine? — and if you are ever going to be young you'd better begin. I can't bear to see you waste your days in that library and on the shore with your gun."

Study of ancestral traits was the occupation of Uncle Peter's life. His was not the vulgar pride which plumes itself on family possessions, or even on honorable achievements of a long line of forbears; to Uncle Peter had been given an abiding interest in the transgressions of those gone before him, in their gloomy mood, their wavering between good and ill. None escaped him, from

the original Paul Warren, who had tamed the wilderness and had built by the sea the old stone house with long, sloping roof and mullioned windows, down to Mr. Peter's own father, James Francis Warren, who had erected the great house in which his son survived him so comfortably. There were old yellow records, old letters, old tales, from which his imagination could suck a gentle melancholy. Sure it was that the family successes and honors had induced anything but a joyous temper. Even the luckless ancestor chosen by Uncle Peter to play the part of scapegoat for his own shortcomings, great-great-grandfather Warren, had not been altogether happy in his sins; and James Francis Warren, who had made a thing of beauty of this great estate, that his descendants might dwell there forever, transforming its broad acres into park land and meadow that almost matched in beauty the far-off Devon home; who had died with an air of achievement, gazing up at the high ceiling which he

had built, and reflecting that his son John was even at that minute sitting in Congress, had felt secretly conscious of inner lack. In matters of this world they had certainly prospered, these Warrens, both in the main line and in the minor branches that had settled in the neighboring towns or had moved out to start new colonies in the West. As a general rule, they had reassuring bank accounts, and safes well lined with bonds and mortgages, and yet few of the men who told their descent in direct line from Paul Warren the elder had known content. Their pent-up energy needed a wider scope than it had ever known since those earliest days when the original settler had tamed the wilderness; and the mere care of the estate meant too slight endeavor for the strong-backed, strong-limbed, strong-minded, hardy race. The early struggles over, of fighting for mere existence, an eager force of mind and body began to turn upon itself, eating into its own substance, and intensity of inner

life had led to vivid experiences both of good and of ill. There had been saints in the family, and sinners too; even crime had not been unknown among them, and tradition told of one neighbor, said to be a remote ancestor of the Bevannes, shot down in a fit of hot anger whose cause had been long forgotten, but whose effects lived on in smouldering enmity, now and then fanned into live flame. It was possibly a recognition of danger in the blood which had induced among the Warrens, generations ago, a tendency toward seclusion. Solitary, introspective, apart, they lived within themselves, mating for the most part with sweet, weak women, who bent or broke under the stronger wills of their husbands. Melancholia had become a part of the family inheritance, and grandfather, father, and son, shutting themselves away from life, had built up a world of false proportions, where great issues sometimes went unnoticed, and trifles bore unusual weight. They grew morbidly sensitive and

self-centred, missing the even measure of things held by those who share a larger life than their own; yet most of them were good, if rather silent, servants of church and of state, — high-tempered, it may be, but high-minded also, contemptuous of hypocrisy even when shown in polite lies, and of all but simple and honest action.

It had come to pass, for places grow in time to wear the expression of the spirits who inhabit them, that a look of sadness and of melancholy settled down over the old Warren place. The low stone wall with its tall gateway; the curving drive, somewhat grass-grown now; the unclipped turf, where long grass waved after it should have been cut; the wide door entering the great hall where the tall clock ticked slowly on the stairs, had a look of isolation. It was so still in this generation, when there was but one child in the house, that it had an air of having been built in primeval quiet, before earth's noises began. In certain corners the air seemed heavy

with the morbid ideas of the dead inhabitants; and Uncle Peter had a fancy, as original as it was convenient, that he knew places in the house where sudden hope would seize you, and others where irresistible passion would tear your soul, driving .you out, powerless, to work its will. At least it was true that all who entered the house either by the marriage altar or by the gates of birth, learned to wear the inward look of the Warrens. Even the dogs caught the family temper, and not Hamlet himself had greater suffering of mind than had Robin Hood, the collie, as he wandered the valley of indecision, where his master had worn a path, with doubting feet.

Yet John Warren had played a not inglorious part in the history of the countryside. After a somewhat wayward youth, he had settled down to the study of the law, and had pursued his work with the ease and calm of a man whose toil is a pastime and not a means of livelihood. He had made no professional

use of his knowledge, but, after being admitted to the bar, had played, against his will, a prominent part in local politics, and had reluctantly gone to Washington to represent his district in Congress. No eloquence is recorded of him; the Warrens are a silent race, with speechlessness often more potent than words. One achievement only marked his stay in the capital, — he came home with a bride, a frail, pretty Southern girl, whom he loved with an ardor that puzzled and sometimes terrified her. John Warren should have married before he was thirty-two, his neighbors said, when they saw the sadness that settled down on the young wife's face. She was but twenty-four, and unused to problems, and the family expression soon fastened upon her. She missed the broad streets of her native city, the crowded receptions, the gay drives, the soft Southern vowels, and the warm Southern sun. Only Aunt Belinda, whom she had brought with her to her Northern home, could console her when the

passion of homesickness came ; and she used to steal out to the kitchen at twilight, when the day's work was done, to hear the rich darky dialect, and to feel the comfort of that presence which seemed to radiate all the physical joyousness of life.

Year after year she watched the winter snowfalls, and the melancholy thawing of the snow ; she watched the coming of summer, with its growth of young grass and tender grain, and all her hurt sense of loneliness went down to her son Paul, whom she loved with a passion that was touched with awe. The sea brought her no message of beauty or comfort, and something of the mystery of its dim horizon-line had crept into the soul of this boy, whose thoughts were not her thoughts, and whose moods she was not able to divine.

She came late into the breakfast room this morning, a gracious figure with soft gray hair, wearing a black morning gown that fell in ample folds about her feet. There were

half tears in her sweet blue eyes, — home of gentle feelings if not of keen thoughts, — as her son rose to draw back her chair and bent to kiss her.

"Letters for you, mother," said Paul, gathering a sheaf of them from the table.

"Letters?" she echoed, as if startled that any outside thing should intrude upon her now; and she adjusted delicately a pair of gold-bowed eyeglasses, turning the envelopes over and over for inspection. The one that was the least easy to understand, addressed in a fine, old-fashioned feminine handwriting, and bearing a Southern postmark, she opened first.

My dear Emily Parkes Warren (it began), — If by any chance you remember me after these years of silence, there will be no need for me to explain that I am Amy Levine Dearborn, and your fifth cousin, and that we were school-children together in Washington forty years ago. However, it is not of

myself that I would write, but of Eleanor Mason's daughter. Surely you remember Eleanor, — who was going to be another Mrs. Browning, but who married at nineteen and was silent forever after? Eleanor died in May this year, and her only daughter has run away. She is an impetuous girl, but very spirited and bright; her mother's death has broken her heart, and Frances has gone North, insisting on being alone, and refusing to take even a maid with her. It seems that her mother was once at a little inn on your New England coast, and the girl has fled there to hide her grief in a spot that her mother knew. The name of the place is the same as that of your old home; if you are still there, can you look after her a little? Forgive me if I am asking too much; it is only for Eleanor Mason's sake that I venture. Moreover, to know Frances will be reward enough for any trouble. When you are acquainted with her you will discover where the poetry in her mother's soul has gone.

Good-by, my dear Emily. Perhaps some day it will be my good fortune to see you again.

Your affectionate friend,

AMY LEVINE DEARBORN.

The gold-rimmed glasses dropped from Mrs. Warren's eyes.

"Paul," she gasped, "Paul, is n't this extraordinary? Of course I want to see Eleanor Mason's daughter, but where can she be?"

"Oh, at some place in the village, probably," answered her son. "You can find her easily enough. I 'll ask the postmaster."

"But what does she mean by saying that when I know her I shall see where Eleanor's poetry has gone? Perhaps she has brought it with her to read on the rocks."

Here Uncle Peter's shaky fist struck the great table with as much force as he could summon.

"By the bones of my ancestors, that 's the girl I saw the other day!"

"Where?" cried Mrs. Warren eagerly. "What does she look like?"

"She looks," answered Uncle Peter, who also had his poetic, or at least his Byronic, moments, "she looks like moonlight and starlight. 'She — walks — in beauty' — don't — you — know — 'like — the night — of — cloudless — climes — and — starry — skies — and — all — that 's — best — of — dark — and — bright — meet — in — her — aspect — and — her — eyes.'"

V

It was the first time that Eleanor Mason's daughter had ever seen a garden which had grown old by the sea. She wandered out into it alone at the noontide of this June day, for Mrs. Warren, who had coaxed the girl to share the solitude of an occasion when her son and Uncle Peter were both absent in the city, was busy giving instructions to Aunt Belinda, and had let her guest go free. It was only yesterday that Mrs. Warren had driven to the Emerson Inn to seek out the daughter of her old friend, and had waited for her in the green-and-gold reception room, wistful, tremulous, her heart beating high with old memories and with present shyness. Frances Wilmot, entering, had paused on the threshold, with a cloud upon her white forehead; the card told her nothing, — she knew only

that somebody had invaded her solitude. But when the older woman rose and held out her hands impetuously, as the sight of the girl's face brushed away forty years of her life, saying, "I was a friend of your mother, my dear," Frances went to her and took her hands, holding her face out to be kissed. To the two it had seemed that they had a long past to talk over; and the young girl's eyes grew dim at meeting her mother as a little child.

She was strolling bareheaded down the long paths, with her face turned slightly upward that the sunlight might fall there, and she was drinking deep of sea air, mingled with fragrance of sweet peas and of tall yellow lilies. Who had made this enchanted garden, she was wondering, with its high walls of stone that reached to the brown rocks, beyond which the blue sea rolled in? It was guarded by spruce trees and cedars, of deeper and softer green than those farther inland, breaking the splendor

of its color where beds of red or yellow roses lay.

It was the original Paul Warren, who, with memories of his Devonshire home fresh in his mind, had planned to make a garden spot of this great space by the water, though he had died, weary of fighting the wilderness, before anything was planted there. His children and grandchildren had broken the sea-meadow into furrows and had planted golden corn and spreading pumpkin vines where tall reeds had grown and the soft marsh grasses had waved in the wind. Fluffy yellow chickens and small brown peeping turkeys, escaping from yard or coop, had gone pattering up and down the spaces where bobolinks had been wont to sway on long grasses. Blue blossoms of flax spread where scarlet queen-of-the-meadow and small red August lilies had grown. It was the wife of the great-great-great-grandfather Warren of reckless fame who had found consolation in the long years of her widowhood in reclaim-

ing a part of the space from vegetables and giving it over to flowers. The beds nearest the house, oval or oblong or star-shaped, had been planned by her, although the white picket fence that had guarded her treasures was gone.

Of the reign of great-grandmother Anne, who had been a lover of all beautiful things, nothing remained save one ragged, sturdy rose tree climbing over the southern wall of gray-brown stone. James Francis Warren, who had caused the walls to be built, had carefully treasured this relic of the past, training it away from its old wooden trellis to new support. He, with tastes that were, perhaps, a far-off echo of those of the first Paul Warren's father, the country squire, had extended the garden-space to the edge of the sea, and had planted the old pear trees, broken and knotted, that still wakened now and then to life and put forth blossoms on the May air. In this fruit garden which met the space of flowers, peach trees and plum and

cherry stood side by side, with neglected currant and gooseberry bushes not far away. Still a few luscious bits of fruit dropped from the broken and crumbling limbs into the tangled grass below, — golden pear, or rose-flushed peach, or plum with dim purple bloom.

Generations of Warrens had played there in childhood, climbing the apple trees, making silken doll robes out of scarlet poppy petals, and royal sceptres of sunflower stems; generations of Warrens had paced the walks to the slow beating of the tide on the rocks beyond, dreaming their love dreams; and generations of white-haired men and white-haired women had tottered up and down these paths, at the edge of eternity and of the sea. And still, though half neglected, it was full of all old-fashioned, lovely things, — yellow crocus and white in earliest spring, and blood-red tulips later when the grass sprang fresh and green ; gorgeous tiger lilies and red poppies, larkspur, and candytuft, all

sweeter in perfume, deeper in color, for the breath of the sea air.

The girl who was walking idly through it felt the long story that she did not know. Song sparrows were twittering among the dim blue berries of the cedars; a great bumble-bee was humming in a bush of old-fashioned single roses, deep red, with golden stamens; and about it all flowed the melody of the sea. Her feet kept time to the measure and to that of some verses that would not be quiet: —

I know a little garden close
Set thick with lily and red rose,
Where I would wander if I might
From dewy morn to dewy night,
And have one with me wandering.

And though within it no birds sing,
And though no pillared house is there,
And though the apple boughs are bare
Of fruit and blossom, would to God
Her feet upon the green grass trod
And I beheld them as before."

For her grief was ever present, though wind and tide had begun, without her know-

ledge, to set it to music with all the rest of the world.

Wandering with no aim save to find the spot where the breeze was freshest or the fragrance most sweet, she came suddenly upon an old man who was busily weeding a bed of cinnamon pinks: it was the eldest Andrew Lane. The hair beneath his sun-browned hat was white as snow, as was the beard that touched the dull blue of his shirt. Hearing a footstep he looked up, turning to the girl a face seamed with a thousand wrinkles, and greeted her with a good-morning.

"It is a very beautiful garden," said Frances Wilmot tentatively; this old man looked as if he might have most interesting things to say.

"I've seen wuss," he answered, weeding again. "But this don't hev no care now. I'm gittin' pretty old."

"You ought to have somebody to help you."

"I don't want nobody to help me," he said shrilly, "till I 'm planted myself. Belindy, she helps about weedin', and we let the rest go."

"Have you worked here long?" asked the girl, drawing nearer.

"Sence them walls was built," said the old gardener, "and that 's sixty year ago. I've took care of the place ever sence, havin' help, of course. Lord, in James Francis Warren's day it *was* a garden: not an extry leaf on anything, and every bush and tree trimmed like a pinted beard."

"I like it a great deal better this way," said the girl confidingly, "just half running wild."

"Do you, now?" said old Andrew Lane. "That 's cur'us; what fur?"

"Oh," she answered lightly, "it looks as if things had happened, and as if it were full of meanings. There 's an air of mystery or something about it."

The toothless smile of the old man's face

vanished, and a shrewd look crept into the pale blue eyes under the sunken eyebrows.

"I don't know nothin' about no myst'ry," he said sullenly, going back to his weeding with vigor; nor could she win any further conversation from him, nor from his small great-grandchild, Andy, who toddled after the old man, in tiny overalls of yellow.

In the afternoon she went with Mrs. Warren about the great house, which, after the fashion of earlier days, faced, not the sea, but the highway. Outside, the young summer had touched its age to freshness: wistaria, still fragrant with clusters of late blossoms, climbed the tall white pillars, and the long festoons of woodbine wore new, flushed leaves and tendrils. Pale purple lilacs were in bloom by the white southern wall, and the faded blue-green blinds of the parlor windows made a most lovely background for the climbing white roses that had crept over them and had fastened them permanently open.

"It is just like home, is n't it?" said the Southern girl.

"It has never seemed so to me," answered the elder lady, puzzled, for home to her had meant the gay life that had gone on in it.

The dimly lighted interior showed little trace of springtime; old furniture, old hangings, suggested only the past. They paused for a time in the library, whose worn leather chairs bespoke long use, and whose great bookshelves were filled with volumes that revealed solid tastes and thoughtful minds.

"My son spends much of his time here. He — he writes," said Mrs. Warren apologetically, for she was filled with a new sense of the difference between Paul and the gallant young heroes of the South. He could do much if he only would to enliven the stay of this charming girl in the North, but he cared little for women, and less for young ones, and his mother sighed softly.

"Please come into the garden again,"

pleaded Frances. "I cannot bear to be away from it."

Mrs. Warren looked at her in wonder, but said nothing, for in later years she had learned more and more to stay silent until she understood. As she paced the old paths with this girl at her side, it seemed to her that the whole expression of the place changed. Tree, flower, and vine took on softer and brighter colors; the eerie sounds that had haunted her ears grew almost joyous, and the old-fashioned sailing boat, the Sea Gull, riding the waves in the sheltered cove by the house, seemed to tug at its moorings as with desire to be free and to dance.

"Ought n't you to have your hat on, to keep from spoiling your complexion?" she asked, with a sudden sense of responsibility.

The girl's laugh rang out sweetly. "Young women nowadays never think of their complexions," she answered, and Mrs. Warren frowned a puzzled little frown. Fewer and

fewer people thought her thoughts or spoke her language, as she grew older.

"This place must have been the greatest joy to you," said Frances suddenly.

"It has been rather an anxiety," said Mrs. Warren. "The gardener has grown so old that he can work only a little and on sunshiny days, and it all needs clipping and trimming. Paul does not understand, and says he likes it this way."

"It looks like a garden in a fairy story, the one where Beauty met the Beast" —

"I never read fairy stories," murmured Mrs. Warren.

"Or the Garden of Hesperides, where the golden apples grew."

"We have very few apples now, and only red ones, though of course I know that is not what you mean," observed the hostess regretfully.

The conversation drifted over to Paul Warren, who had come home by the four o'clock train, and who was pacing his favor-

ite garden path, hidden, close by the north wall, by an arbor vitæ hedge. If the truth must be known, he had taken refuge there to avoid his mother's guest. The girl's voice startled him : melodious and full, it sounded like hidden music along his nerves. There were ripples of laughter in it, and soft little murmurs of sadness ; and it played upon him as fingers play upon keys. The fact that it belonged to a woman did not interest him ; it was as if he had discovered a new art.

He waited until the sound of familiar hoof-beats assured him that the guest was being driven home in the old-fashioned family carriage, and then came out of his retreat, self-reproachful when he heard his mother's laments that he had not come home in time to meet the child of her old friend.

VI

THE lowest ebb of the tide came in the early afternoon, and the curving sand beach that lay just beyond the Warren homestead, like a sickle of pale gold cutting the blue water from green grassy meadow, stretched parched and dry in the glare of the summer sun. Bird songs were hushed, but the low hum of insects was on the hot air, and from far, with an ironic sound as of cool water retreating from thirsty need, came the ripple of withdrawing waves. Paul Warren, restlessly active in the languid air, was walking up and down the veranda, keeping pace with grief, for step by step beside him he seemed to hear the echo of the footfall that had so often sounded with his own. Suddenly a soft nose was thrust into his hand with a long, mournful whimper, and two

great golden-brown eyes were lifted to his in passionate entreaty: Robin Hood was still hunting for his master.

"Poor old fellow!" said Paul, patting the upturned head, "I would give him back to hunting you if I could."

The old dog sniffed anxiously at the young man's coat and hands, then drew away and gazed with eyes in which the look of entreaty was changing to one of deep reproach.

"It is something I do not understand any better than you do, Robin, and yet I know you don't believe me. You are saying to yourself: 'Whose fault is it, then, if not yours, and where have you hidden him away?'"

Robin, as if assenting, walked away with a low growl, and his young master, ever quick of sympathy with dumb beasts, looked after him with eyes that matched his own in depth of puzzled sorrow.

Here Uncle Peter strolled out upon the veranda, fresh and smiling, with a cigarette

between his teeth, and under his arm a paper-covered novel drawn from a large and varied store which he had been accumulating for more than forty years. With a swift movement, Paul slipped into the library in time to escape, and drew a sigh of relief at the sight of the shelves where his beloved, silent friends awaited him, and where sense and spirit could rest in the mellow coloring of old leather chairs and worn volumes. As he loved for their solitude certain lonely parts of the shore where his own best thoughts seemed always to await him, he loved the quiet of this spot; and now, without opening a book, he touched one after another with his finger tips, — Spinoza, Kant, Sir Thomas Browne, the thinkers great and small whose minds had kindled his own, almost fancying that he felt a responsive pressure from the leather-bound volumes. The old black-letter romances and the illuminated missal in the cabinet by the fireplace must surely share his sense of loss, — so great had been his

father's pride in them; and the worn copies of Spencer and Huxley must miss the hands that were gone. The cover of Darwin's "Descent of Man" was torn where Robin had chewed it as John Warren went to sleep in his chair one day, and Paul touched it with gentle fingers, remembering. So they had passed on, generation by generation, he mused, leaving here upon the library shelves a record of their tastes and of their callings, like driftwood cast up by the sea. The set of antique sermons had belonged to the ministerial ancestor; the old dramas to one who had a liking for written plays; the "Spectators" and "Ramblers" to his grandfather, James Francis Warren; and here was he, Paul, with his huge volumes of German philosophy, his row of French essayists in their yellow paper covers, and his abiding sense of the world's lack of need of him. Softened light came into the great room through the half-closed shutters; a golden bumblebee wandered in on a ray of sunlight and had

difficulty in finding his way out; warm fragrance of all things blossoming in the garden stole in on the breeze. The young man dropped into a great leather-covered chair, flung his arms down upon the table, over some sheets of his own manuscript where the ink had dried ten days ago, and buried his face in them to rest. Here, and here only, the awful sense of difference was gone, and the quick and the dead were alike. Then, in the silence, his mind began to travel the old ways of question: what was it all for, the bootless search, the suffering, the long thinking, and the pain? Surely there was but small return for the great demands that life made upon one's power to endure.

Slowly the shadowed days of all his life came back to him; the boyhood spent in the gloomy house, where the long silences, his mother's unspoken sadness, and Uncle Peter's morbid fancies regarding the past had cast a spell upon him; and then the years of study when he had grown from child to

man, coming home at each vacation to find the old house absolutely unchanged. Through the dull color of it all a sense of his father's pride and interest in his son had run like a thread of gold. It was he who had guided the child's reading, giving him books unknown to most boys of ten and of twelve; it was he who had sat quietly chuckling at his son's comments on men and on things; for an insight into the ironies of life had come to the lad too easily and too soon, and the words of his tongue were as the fine pricking of a delicately pointed weapon; it was he who had fostered the boy's gift for writing, coaxing the dark-haired youngster, who had always an elusive look in his eyes, to sit upon his knee and repeat the verses he had written. Paul did it shyly, the color deepening in his cheeks; and even now he could remember the thrill of joy that came when his father patted him on the head and praised him, for words of praise and caresses had been few and far between. Sometimes

the inherited mood of sadness had been broken by charmed moments when sudden enchantment visited him, and, surrendering to the unconscious spell of warm sunshine on fragrant flowers, or of the beat of a summer shower on the window-pane, he dreamed rare dreams of happiness and of great achievement.

Always Paul had loved the old house, whose expression had settled early upon his childish face. He liked its dark corners and mysterious doorways, especially the awful one leading to the garret, which he used to pass at twilight, just to see if he dared, glorying in the cold shivers that crept up and down his back. He loved the ancestral pictures in the parlor and above the winding stairs, where they hung with the corner of each gilt frame touching the one next higher. The faces that smiled and were sweet appealed to him less than did certain portraits wearing a melancholy and sin-stricken look. One, which hung just above

the landing by the old clock, always terrified him : it was his wicked great-great-great-grandfather Warren, looking out from the canvas with a dare-devil expression. Alone, in the dark, Paul sometimes felt that scowl close behind him, quite disembodied, and the sharp hairs of the eyebrows seemed to prick his neck as the phantom ancestor stealthily pursued ; for the grotesque theories of Uncle Peter had peopled passageway and chamber with a terrible race, all the more real because invisible, forever lying in wait. Under his conjuring tongue old mood and old transgression became again alive and potent to harm ; and that which was to him a species of intellectual entertainment, as his imaginative power met the challenge of the child's deep eyes, and fabled further, became the very warp and woof of the boy's thoughts by day, and of his dreams by night.

In time the sheer fascination of story began to mingle with a questioning of good and of ill, and he knew a different fear : that

this sensual mouth, that cruel eye, among the painted features, might come to be his own. In one dim face on the library wall supreme terror lay for him in the bulge of the lip and the lines about the eyes; and, dreaming for himself especial cause for stern self-discipline, he grew into a tall lad of morbid fancies, who had early begun to think of himself as cursed by destiny to stand apart.

To stand apart! That had been the keynote of Paul Warren's life, through his school years, through college, through his law study. He had made his mark as a man of wide reading and of literary power, shown chiefly in a fine keenness of judgment, but his strength of mind and of character had brought him little comfort for the unexplained grief of being; and melancholy, which knows no logic, had early gained a deep hold upon him. Forming for himself an impossibly high ideal of blameless conduct, he lashed himself mercilessly for failure to reach the superhuman, the man's self-criticism being imper-

ceptibly tinged by the boy's belief in awful hereditary impulse that might at any time undo him unaware. Remote ancestral sins and uncommitted sins of his own became, in his long brooding, inextricably confused, and so long had he walked with shadows that the distinction between mist and headland was no longer clear. Only this seemed plain, that the great stream of human life was not for him: birth he had shared with the rest of the race; death he must share; but love and marriage and dreams of happiness were not his portion. Half in fear, half in shyness, he shunned women; and few ventured beyond an interested scrutiny of the dark face with the gleam of fire in the eyes, and the occasional sensitive quiver of the lip. Driven back upon a world of his own creating, he lived with his books and his pen, the old ironic sense of things constantly deepening, as smothered passion and imaginative power struggled vainly for expression.

That feeling of the profound irony of ex-

istence was strong upon him at this moment, as he thought of the quiet companionship with his father by the open fire on winter evenings, or on the veranda under the summer stars, and remembered the mound of earth in the green cemetery, with the knowledge that there was nobody now who could keep silence and understand. Then, vainly brooding over the why and the wherefore of human love and of loss, he grew dimly aware of something tugging at pulse and nerve: an overmastering desire to grasp this profound sense of greatness which he felt throbbing at the heart of pain. Stung to new life by the poignant hurt of grief in a soul woven in grays out of other people's sorrows and misfortunes, he quivered with a sudden intuition of what it might mean to know and share all the common lot.

His restlessness drew him forth from the library to pace the graveled drive; there drooping leaf and grass blade, and the far murmur of the waves, chimed with his sense

of life withdrawn. From the gateway his eyes wandered over the wide sweep of country, and he saw the curling road that led past the gray stone tower of his mother's church, St. Mark's, and the grove of scraggly locusts that marked the home of the Bevannes. The thought of the name startled him, recalling the words of deep hatred that his father had uttered in the solemn moment of dying, and he searched his memory for some incident in the long family quarrel which could explain them. Grave misdeed had there been in the remote past, and tradition told of constant trouble between this impetuous race of the Bevannes, with their strain of French blood, and his own solid English forbears. He was aware that the latter, who were both reticent and proud, had a way of treating offenses up to a certain point as not worth noticing, and beyond that as past forgiveness, but he could remember nothing that could account for so great intensity of present feeling. As he wondered,

swift changes of expression flitted across his face, — shocked, deep pity for the father in whom primitive passion, flaming up at that great hour, had consumed all else; deepened love where he failed to understand; and a humorous compassion for himself as failing to share the elemental feelings of the race, were all written there. What should he do with this heritage? he asked himself whimsically, he who had no quarrel with any man, who did not know the cause of his father's deadly anger, and who, perhaps, did not care strongly enough to hate.

He strolled back in the warm air to the house and out into the garden paths, full once more of the old weary feeling that he had little use for the world and its puzzles.

"I have a fundamental prejudice against all conundrums," he murmured to himself; then suddenly, and without warning, he walked into a world entirely new.

There, by the tall white summer lilies, whose fragrance made sweet the summer

air, stood a tall, white girl with a branch of spiræa in her hand, her dark hair bare in the sunlight, and her dark eyes full of dreams. When she heard his step, she looked up but did not move. Paul Hollis Warren swiftly removed his hat and introduced himself: when brought to bay, he was a young man of complete self-possession and fine courtesy.

"You are my mother's friend, Miss Wilmot," he said, holding out his hand. "May I present myself as my mother's son?"

The girl took his offered hand, but did not speak.

"If it is not impertinent," said Paul, "I should like to ask why you look so surprised."

"Because," answered the stranger, half seriously, "I had not the slightest idea that you were real."

"I 'm not, altogether," confessed the host. "None of us are, I presume. But what did you think me?"

"I thought that you were part of this enchanted garden, and of the past."

"Indeed?"

"I thought that you belonged with Mr. Peter's phantom ancestors, the wicked one, and great-grandmother Anne. I thought that the ghosts about this spot needed a *jeune premier*, and that you had been invented for the purpose and named Mr. Paul Hollis Warren."

"But my mother" —

"I thought that you were just a Delusion of a Son that the dear lady had fashioned out of dreams for her comfort. You will admit that you have the property of being invisible?"

"I admit that I have it at times," answered Paul, with a smile of unwonted gayety. "Do you believe in nothing but what you see?"

"But I have been here so many times, and you have not deigned to put on flesh and blood."

"I have been very busy," explained Paul quietly.

The gravity in the girl's face broke, her dimple quivered, and her eyes danced.

"If I may give you a suggestion, you do not manage your exits and your entrances as well as they did in the Arabian Nights. There is just a minute at the transformation when you are visible. Once it was at the end of the garden walk that the change came; once it was in the library, and you left so hastily that the door was still in motion. A genuine ghost goes through the keyhole!"

"I find the door a very comfortable means of exit, thank you."

"It may all be comfortable for you," said the girl severely, "but it is very uncomfortable for me. Mrs. Warren insists that she finds comfort in my presence, and that she likes to have me with her. But it is not quite pleasant to think that I have driven the master of the house to play the part of castle spectre."

"I assure you that I have been absorbed in other things. It would grieve me deeply, Miss Wilmot, if you should take back one minute of the time that you might give my mother."

"Will you make a compact with me?" asked Frances Wilmot, noting the softened look that came into the young man's face as he spoke of his mother. "I should be very sorry to deprive Mrs. Warren of anything that may give her the slightest pleasure. If you will stay in your accustomed places, so that Mrs. Warren may still realize that she has a son, I will promise to treat you as if you were invisible. I will pretend that you are n't there, and will never see you!"

"I am not quite ready to agree to that," said Paul, laughing outright, and looking at her curiously.

"Then I shall stay away."

"Oh, I will promise, if you are serious," he said hastily.

His mind was full of a bit of old story

which he had read on some serious page, — his knowledge of myth was strictly confined to footnotes, — of a maiden who had come beckoning out of the world beyond the edge of things with a spray of white blossoms in her hand, and had witched a mortal man away with her to live forever and a day in fairyland. She must have looked like this girl before him, and, when she stepped into the world of every-day, must have wrought some such change on grass and tree and flower.

VII

The little gray stone church of St. Mark's stood well within the hearing of the tide, near a shingly beach where long, gentle breakers were rolling monotonously in on this June morning. Frances Wilmot, reverent and rebellious, sad and again at peace, as the words of the long service smote now this chord and now that, closed her eyes again and again, only for the pleasure of opening them suddenly to steal a long glance through the window near, where, beyond the encircling green ivy leaves, she could look out across the shining water of palest blue. Word and phrase from old romance drifted back to her, and it seemed as if she too, like the wandering knight, had found a little chapel by the side of the "leaved wood;" and as if across the waves might come the

ship that moved without sail or oar, carrying Perceval on his quest of the Holy Grail. Sweet from the sea stole in the breeze to creep about the altar, and the ivy leaves trembled against it as it came. Murmur of water and murmur of organ blended into one soft music; then suddenly out of the low melody sprang splendid power of sound, bringing a swift sense of glory walking on the water.

Her friends from the Inn were all there, and, in the pauses of their own devotions, they stole involuntary glances now and then toward the girl who had become the centre of their thoughts, to see how she was performing hers. But the music won them all, and swept them out from thoughts like these to moods as great as the encircling horizon line, and for a moment the sweep of the sea and of the winds of God was in their souls.

With a sudden beat as of triumph the recessional ceased, and the moment set to melody was over. The members of the congre-

gation of St. Mark's realized that they were out upon the green in front of the little church, the music to which they had been stepping still keeping rhythm in their feet. Even Paul Warren, who cared more for the harmony of high thoughts than for beaten measures, was conscious that the air about him was more exquisitely attuned than was its wont, and no sooner was he aware of this than there came a sudden breaking of its perfectness. He was waiting while his mother stopped to speak to Miss Wilmot, when a stranger came forward to meet him, — a stranger with a face that he knew. It was a man of his own age, slender and supple, with an ingratiating air in his bright blue eyes and about his smiling mouth. There was a touch of hesitancy in the newcomer's manner as he held out his hand.

"It is a long time since we have met, but you have not forgotten Alec Bevanne, I hope?"

"Of course not," said Paul Warren, re-

turning the handshake, "though it must be a matter of fifteen years or so since I've seen you."

"Odd that we should have missed each other constantly. You've been back at the old place now and then?"

"Often, in summer. You were abroad when I heard of you last."

The young man nodded, smiling.

"Digging, yes. I've done a lot of it, Paris mostly. Now it's my turn to set other youngsters at it."

As Paul Warren looked at his old playmate, thinking how oddly the new half-serious look sat upon the face which was associated in his mind with prisoner's base and marbles, and wondering how that headlong nature, given to quick deed and quick repenting, in flashes of emotion or of momentary conviction, could adapt itself to the routine of academic life, there came suddenly into his mind an echo of the words his father had uttered as he lay dying: "Fight,

fight Bevanne . . . look out for the young one then . . . young rattlesnakes are as poisonous as old ones." The memory of John Warren's expression as he had spoken these words fell like a shadow on the peaceful picture of sunlight shining on women's faces and on children's curls, and a sense of more vivid curiosity than he had ever before felt concerning the long mystery that had clung to the relationship of his family with the Bevannes swept over Paul Warren: what had caused that look of frozen anger on his father's face when chance placed any member of that family in his way? What had he to do with vendetta directed against this smiling, harmless enemy, whose eager friendliness seemed to have back of it the same puzzled feeling that he had himself? The moment wrapped him round in a sort of humorous sadness; after all, you were bidden to love your enemy, as well as to obey your parents, and perhaps the former command was the more cogent of the two.

His state of mind was certainly pacific, when, following the glance of Alec Bevanne's eyes, a flash of illumination came, and he fancied that he understood the sudden cordiality. It was not for the sake of the old days when the two had been playmates that the young man had stopped to speak with him, — it was because of this Southern girl who was talking with his mother, and whose soft black gown and drooping black hat were worn with such unwonted grace. Paul Warren involuntarily turned away, refusing the unspoken request, then paused in amusement at his own action and the touch of irritation that had led to it. Understanding his neighbor perfectly at that moment, he was aware that he failed to understand himself and his assumption of protective rights.

"Won't you stop to see my sister Alice?" asked Bevanne, whose quick eyes had divined the other's action, but still beamed friendliness; there was never in them reproach for

any one. "You remember her? She used to cry because she could not play baseball with us."

Paul lifted his eyes and saw her. She had grown from a slender child into a slender woman: her pale yellow hair had not darkened by a shade, but her eyes, which were of light hazel with extraordinarily large pupils, had gained a world of meaning and of expression. As he greeted her they were fixed upon him with a gaze so intense that they made him uneasy. She had heard her brother's remark, but she did not speak nor smile, and it was left to Paul to face the occasion. Meeting one who mastered him in silence was something of a shock, and the polite remark he had intended to make slipped away.

"But you used to be the swiftest at tag," he said, going back at one bound over many years.

Now a slow smile came like color into the girl's face, touching eyes and cheeks with

added expression, where almost too much had been before.

"That never atoned for the baseball," said Alice Bevanne.

Mrs. Warren turned suddenly, and her pleasure at seeing her son talking with the children of the family enemy left a flush upon her face. It was she who, after a cordial greeting, presented them to the girl at her side, and she stood beaming over them all with an expression which was the peace of the moment made visible.

"It is very jolly to meet some one from the South, Miss Wilmot," Alec Bevanne was saying. "I am a Southerner myself now."

"Indeed?"

"Do you know Alabama University?" he asked, stroking his smooth-shaven chin with a gesture which recalled the vanished pointed beard. "I am there — for the present."

It occurred to Paul Warren as he heard this remark that he was in the presence of

a man with whom he should be glad to differ in matters of opinion and of taste, and he smiled with satisfaction as Miss Wilmot carelessly changed the subject, tacitly refusing to discuss the young professor's career.

One by one the people about them departed, white gown and yellow and blue drifting past against the background of cool green leaf and grass; Paul led his mother to her carriage, while the Southern girl waited for her companions from the Inn. Together they walked home through the fragrant, dust-flecked air, the petals of pink wild roses falling along their path, and, overhead, the leaves of silver poplars trembling in gray-green against the sky.

The ladies of the Emerson Inn had adopted this girl with no mental reserves; the Warren carriage had waited for her too often at the door to leave any doubt of her desirability as an acquaintance. With not only Respectability but Tradition bending thus obsequiously over her, they whispered to

one another that her strange arrival was mere accident: she had come North to visit Mrs. Warren, but had been prevented by Mr. Warren's sudden illness and death. Moreover, they liked her: it was as if some tropical bird of brilliant plumage and vivid eyes had dropped down among them. There was always about her an air of expectancy, for she was one to whom the kaleidoscopic shifting of things constantly presented new shades of beauty and of significance, and she ever kept an alert eye on the flashing, changing stuff of life. Something of her sense of wonder and romance walking still the paths of every day began to hover like a rosy cloud about each gray head.

It was not only the guests who were touched by it: every inhabitant of the Inn, from Mr. Phipps to the schoolmistress-maid, felt a touch of indefinable pleasure in the presence of this girl. Yet the schoolmistress sorely disapproved, and was not without a secret share of the hope cherished by the

cultured ladies, of leading this Southern maiden to a higher life.

"I'm fond of reading, too," ventured the maid, glancing one day at the pile of books that had to take refuge on the floor in a corner of Miss Wilmot's room, "but I never read novels. I don't believe in wasting time, do you?"

She got only a smile for reply, a puzzled, serious smile that finally decided to be merry and broke into little quivering curves at the corners of the lips; and she went away, baffled, with a puzzled face. It was as if she had lost sight of something that had just passed, many-colored and with iridescent wings.

With a purpose as lofty as that of the maid, the guests of the Inn bore Frances Wilmot away in triumph this Sunday afternoon, a maiden sacrifice, to read poetry upon the rocks. They were all in a softened mood, and, before beginning, indulged her in a little random conversation.

"How does it happen that you have never before seen the ocean, my dear?" asked the Lady from Wilmington.

"We had a summer home at Blue Ridge and went there nearly every year," answered the girl, her heart crying out for the call of the gulls and the sweep of the sea and silence.

It was the little Lady from Boston who sat nearest her on the rocks, claiming a place as friend by virtue of her initial judgment of the young stranger. "One can always tell a lady, I think," was all she had said by way of reproof; and she had followed her first favors with kindliness that was both simple and sweet.

"Is n't it charming at the Warren place?" she asked. "Do you know that it is full, simply full, of treasures? There are silver platters and punch bowls and beautiful old spoons hidden away in the dark cupboards. Do ask Mrs. Warren to bring them out for you some day."

"Why?" asked the girl perversely.

"Because you may never have another chance."

"But I've seen that kind of thing all my life. I'm sorry, but I cannot care profoundly about old punch bowls."

"Mr. Paul Warren looks more distant than ever," growled the Lady from Cincinnati. "No man of his age ought to have that brooding expression, and yet his face is distinctly interesting. He resembles some old portrait that one often sees: whose is it, — Sir Thomas More's, or" —

"It is the Warren house that he resembles," volunteered Frances Wilmot in the pause. "He has that look suggesting old experiences not his own."

"He is very gifted and very eccentric," interposed the Lady from Boston hastily, lest something still more foolish should be said. "Nobody knows him. So much of his time has been spent abroad, and so much now is spent in study, that I imagine he is out of touch with things."

"Educated as a lawyer, was n't he?" asked the elderly lady who was Somebody from Somewhere.

"I do not know," said Frances Wilmot patiently. She felt the need of many things more keenly than the need of conversation about Mr. Paul Warren.

"Humph!" said the lady who had asked the question. "It seems to me I have heard his Uncle Peter tell how he finished his study and began practicing in Boston. One day he drove up to the old house here in a station carriage, with his trunks in an express wagon behind him.

"'Well?' said old Mr. Warren; they are such a silent family, you know.

"'I 've given it up,' said Mr. Paul. 'I shall try some profession where I can be an honest man.'

"The father only chuckled, without a word, and Mr. Peter said that it was probably the longest discussion of motive that had ever taken place between them."

Here the reading began. They had brought with them the most detestable of anthologies, — and to the girl in whose behalf they were exerting themselves all anthologies were detestable, — and they took turns in rendering the verse contained therein. Frances Wilmot profanely recalled scenes of Indian torture where a similar rotation was observed, for false metres truly rendered and true metres falsely rendered smote like blows upon her sensitive ear. They were too tactful to ask her to take her turn : the schools in the South were so poor, and she probably did not read very well ! Neither at the reading nor during the discussion that followed, however, did her inner misery break through her fine courtesy. They were very good to her, she kept saying to herself, as she clung to the rock with appealing hands.

" They take life as they take grape-nuts," she thought, " predigested, and with the substance gone. What meaning can it have for them after it has been so discussed ? Can't

they see that beauty talked about disappears?"

To-day the criticism languished, for, all unknown to the ladies of the Emerson Inn, the intellectuality of their lives was slipping away in the presence of this girl's keen zest in facing existence. When at last they let her go, they watched her, dreaming, for the charm of her free footsteps had begun to touch the measure of their own, and wherever she was there was a sense as of doors and windows flung open to wide spaces.

Upon a straggling woodland path, soft with pine needles of unnumbered years, she set her feet with a sense of exquisite relief. Delicate leaves of birch and of poplar touched her flushed cheek with green coolness; she gathered her hands full of live spruce twigs and crushed them passionately. It was hard for one whose gift was that of winning from each moment its utmost reach of joy or of pain to understand this sort of mental nibbling at the edges of things, yet she knew

that the air was sweeter and her path more free because of her late bondage, and, with a sigh, she let the great silence of beauty infold her.

VIII

On a broad shelf of rock in a great fissure of the cliff sat Frances Wilmot, her hands clasped about her knees, swaying rhythmically to and fro with the rhythm of the waves beneath. Spray dashed on her brown cheek and bare head, and a little wind had blown one damp lock across her face. A line of deep tan showed on either arm outstretched from the white shirt-waist; there were no floating ruffles about her now, only a sturdy white piqué that showed traces of recent climbing over the rocks. She bore small resemblance to the dainty maiden who had alighted at the Emerson Inn three weeks ago, and might have been a sea-born thing that had crawled for a little space out of the limpid water and the tangled weeds of green and brown that grew below. She was croon-

ing softly to herself as she swayed this way and that, for out of her passionate love she was making a song of the tide, and the rich voice sank to low murmurs, then rose to clear triumph as the little ripple over the rocks got into it, and the joy of the oncoming wave. She listened, as she tried now this note and now that, for the melody of retreating water, and its hidden sound as it sought crevice or tiny cavern that none else knew, while the memory of its least echo on the pebbles of the long beach came back to her, and of its thunder in the sudden storm of two days ago.

"Oh, I can't do you!" she said, shaking back her spray-moistened hair; "you are so free a thing, and yet the great rhythm is there in the veriest ripple that I can hardly hear."

Living the life of the water, she had grown to talk to the sea as to a comrade, and on far headland or at the edge of sheer gray cliff a mighty presence had seemed to meet

her, answering word and cry. Now she was silent; in the silence, too, the answer came, and the girl listened, with eyelids closed, her dark head leaning against the rock. Paul Warren, coming abruptly upon her retreat, stopped, afraid to move this way or that, lest her eyes should open; and, as he paused, irresolute, he gazed with deepening wonder. That expression, worn by her face and by the whole figure nestling close to the stone, of being one with sun and sea and rock, smote home to the heart of the man who had known close kinship with naught save books. More quick than ever in his heart to-day were those old influences, of morbid theory and of melancholy life, which had worked on the mind of the child with an intensity cruelly disproportionate to their real weight; and wind and sea, bringing a keener sense of aloofness, brought, too, unknown desire. Curiously impersonal at last in his way of taking things, he had grown to stand apart even from himself, — in an attitude not of

self-absorption, but of self-indifference; one's own personality was an object of such small interest! Now his whole being was full of a sudden yearning to find and claim his world, for the touch of life had come like the flick of a whip on the sensitive flanks of a restive horse. The wide horizon line and the look on Frances Wilmot's face brought home to him a deepened feeling of his isolation, and no sooner was he aware of it than she opened her eyes, causing an expression of genuine annoyance in his. Was it because he was disturbing her or because she was disturbing him, she wondered, as she gave him greeting.

"You really ought not to appear unannounced," she said saucily, unawed by the half-frown on his face. "Polite ghosts rap. Don't you realize that the sudden materialization of spirits is trying for mortal nerves?"

He smiled back, quickly touched by her mood.

"May the ghost sit down for a minute,

long enough to beg your pardon, — that is, if it is permitted to him to speak?"

"They never wait for permission. It is their own caprice, and not that of the living, that governs them."

"In that case," said Paul Warren, settling himself comfortably, "I feel justified in staying, even at the risk of disturbing the mermaid in her cave."

"I'm not a mermaid," said the girl, her lip curling imperceptibly.

"And I'm not a ghost. But if you set the fashion of calling names, you must expect people to follow."

"There's a difference between calling names and giving names," she retorted, looking at him through merry, half-shut eyes. "And you really are a ghost, you know, only you don't half understand your properties. You ought to appear in diaphanous white, made in the fashion of a trailing robe or toga, and you ought to wear a dim electric light shining somewhere in your hair. I will ad-

mit, however, that you have chosen a day quite in keeping with the spirit world."

It was one of the times of veiled beauty, when pine and juniper and sweet-fern on the cliff above wore a deeper and more blended green because of the absent sunlight, and the gray-brown rocks with their crumbling lichens took on a lovelier tone. The low, soft clouds that floated overhead shaded from purple to pale silvery gray which matched the under side of the wings of the gulls, and the water gave back the color hue for hue, out and farther out where even the horizon line vanished in the mystery of infinite distance. It was late afternoon; cliff swallows, with deep purple wings and breasts that hinted the dim red of the rocks, were circling near; and the air was soft and sweet as the caresses of dear, dead hands.

"Ghost," said Frances Wilmot, turning suddenly to check the mist that came unbidden to her eyes, "I see a book in your pocket. There is a spiritualist lady at the

Inn who would be delighted to find out what you read in the place you come from. Perhaps she could make little paragraphs for the papers: 'Books most in demand during the last week in the Spirit World!'"

Paul Warren drew the volume from its hiding-place.

"I was merely investigating; it does not represent my taste."

"Nietsche!" cried the girl. "Now I know why you have avoided me so carefully: you were afraid I would talk to you about Nietsche. I assure you I won't; I have n't read him."

"You must be a rather unusual woman if that would prevent you from discussing him! Besides, I have n't avoided you."

"Mr. Paul Hollis Warren," said the girl quickly, "is n't your great-great-great-grandfather Warren about to enter into you and tell a fib?"

It was impossible not to give back her laughter, note for note.

"Perhaps," he admitted, "but I had not met you."

"That 's something of a bull, is n't it, — you could not meet me because you had not met me? But to come back to Learned Women: what do you suppose my comrades at the Inn asked me last night?"

"Being a mere man, I have not the wit to suggest."

"What arguments for the immortality of the soul I thought most convincing!"

"And you told them" —

"I told them," she said, with a dimple, "to remember that the schools in the South are very poor; it is something they often say to excuse my shortcomings. Then the Lady from Wilmington said that it was a most important question, to which I should give deep thought."

"How did you escape?"

"I said," she answered slowly, "that, whatever it is, it is n't a question, and that any immortality of the soul worth having is

beyond the reach of argument, for to say that you believe is to express a doubt. Surely it is present, insistent, throbbing in every nerve! The Lady from Wilmington was deeply shocked."

"Did anything happen?"

The girl answered by a peal of laughter.

"In the words of old romance: 'She shaped herself, horse and man, by enchantment into a great marble stone.' Then she was attacked by the Lady from Cincinnati, who is scientific, and a positivist. She remarked, between two bits of a roll, that our knowledge is strictly limited to the world that we see; that metaphysical assertions are therefore impossible, and then said loudly that there is no immortality of the soul. I am telling you all this because I don't know whether it is the Summer Girl or the Learned Woman that you are afraid of in me, and I am trying to find a golden mean between the two, being neither."

"I suppose it would be useless to assure

you that I am not afraid of you in any aspect; I trust that I have the courage of an ordinary man. I am very much interested in what you are saying; please go on."

"There was n't any more," said Frances, "for I insisted that her last remark was a metaphysical assertion, and that she ought not to make it, therefore she said that my logic would improve as I grew older."

Paul Warren looked at the girl curiously: it was hard to tell whether she was merry or sad, in jest or in earnest. The serious glance of his eyes brought mirth quickly to the surface in hers.

"Ghost," she said suddenly, "do you know that the water is all purple-gray, changing every minute with a beauty that takes the heart out of you?"

He looked at it critically.

"No," he admitted; "I did not."

"And the heart of it all is the change, change, change; can't you hear the moments go by with swiftly tripping feet? It

is the feeling it come and go that makes the beauty; you will never find through all eternity just the same shade of color, whatever more exquisite tint may come."

"You are a poet," he said deliberately. "Why are n't you writing poetry?"

She spread her brown hands out to the spray.

"Why spoil it by writing it? I want to feel it in my finger tips, and hear it in my ears, with no printed pages between. Do you know that the waves make an entirely different music on the rocks and in all the clefts and crannies on a shaded day like this, from that which they make when the sun is shining?"

"I am afraid not," he answered, smiling skeptically.

She looked at him with laughing eyes.

"You are just a mind, very thinly embodied, are n't you? You would n't care if the sky were colorless and the sea dumb. You ought n't to be troubled with carrying

about the weight of a body, for you don't need even wings."

"I thought you were only a girl," he remarked irrelevantly.

"I'm not!" said Frances. "'I'm a woman growed,' if you please, sir! But do you mind telling me what it is like in the realm of pure thought?"

"Not if you will tell me what it is like under the sea," he retorted.

"Oh," cried the girl, "I could n't tell you all, for part of it is a mystery. But it is cool and clear and green, and the bed of it is dim with gold and red with coral, and rich colors running all through the scale are there, browns that shade into purples, and blues that fade into greens, and some of the growths are live creatures, and some don't know whether they are living things or not," — here she glanced wickedly at him and tilted her chin a wee bit in the air, — "and" —

"And?" for she had paused.

"You sit in the midst of it, and you bathe in the color that is like living light. You sit way, way down at the centre of the deep, and you know the heart of the great tides, and the way they come and the way they go, and the reason of it all, but you never tell."

"Don't stop," he begged.

"You shall have no more of it," she answered, "until you can see the color and hear the waves. Now tell me how they made you a ghost; I want to know the training in the Spirit Land."

"It goes way, way back," he said lightly. "First you have some ancestors who think much about theology" —

"And one who is bad," suggested Frances.

"One who is very bad, and many who are reckless, and in the course of time the race gets rather confused in its mind, the sinners beginning to brood too much over their sins" —

"And about saving their own souls," interrupted the girl.

"Precisely. They read a great deal and they meditate a great deal, and then, possibly because they have found life too much for them, they hand it on, till at last it comes to a youngster made out of all the odds and ends, of broken faiths and shattered ideals. He has a fairly active mind, and, brought up in the shadow of the past, he sets to work to try to think things out. You see, as he grows up, he feels that the powers that be have tossed him a pretty hard nut to crack when they tossed him this world" —

"And a boy who would never have dreamed of trying to crack a nut by thinking about it, but would have gone at it with nerve and muscle, is foolish enough to believe that he can *think* out this world!" cried the girl willfully. "And yet it was n't his fault. They had taught him theories and theologies, and so he turned out to be" —

"A ghost?" said Paul Warren, laughing. It was the first foolish conversation he had ever had in his life, and he was enjoying it.

"A philosopher," said the girl severely.

"You don't object to a man's using what mind he has?" he queried meekly.

"It should be kept in its place, being a good servant, but a bad master."

"Who taught you all this? Siren or mermaid you must be, for no mortal maiden of your years could have this depth of knowledge. It is a combination of the wisdom of four years and of fourscore."

"A father and a mother," said the girl, with a sudden shining in her eyes, "who had lived and who knew. The wisdom and the beauty of things I felt when I was a little child at their knees, and it was impossible, as I grew older, not to understand."

The purple-winged swallows flew nearer, unafraid, for the voices had ceased, and the two people in the cleft in the rock were suddenly aware that their jesting conversation had led them into the depths; and, with the feeling once more that they were strangers, there was on the part of both a desire to es-

cape. Water and gentle air and cloud floated softly about them, encompassing them with rest. Paul Warren took his leave, stiffly enough. He was half angry with himself for the way in which he had been talking with a woman, having never before ventured so far from under the protecting shell of his reserve; and he was filled with wonder at this girl's poignant sense of things of which in his nine and twenty years he had been but dimly aware. Her eager grasp on all that touched her life stung him with sudden conviction of the futility of his careless way of letting go.

IX

"PAUL," asked Uncle Peter sharply, strolling down the piazza steps with a cigar between his teeth, "what is the lawn being clipped for?"

Lifting his eyes from his book, the young man looked with a certain satisfaction down the broad slope which was being converted into something halfway between a stubble field and velvet turf.

"I thought it would be a good thing to get it into the shape it had when grandfather was alive. We have been a bit careless lately."

Uncle Peter clapped his hands together in delight. He was in high spirits this morning, and evidently in possession, according to his own theories, of the jolliest soul among his forefathers.

"I told you so! I told you so! Ancestral

traits coming out as plain as daylight! You laugh at my ideas, yet here you are a living proof of them. So your grandfather Warren is uppermost in you to-day! *I* am having a touch myself of Peter Finch; he was a great joker, you know. Wonderful, wonderful that you can't escape from your grandfather, however hard you try."

Here Uncle Peter turned and saw old Andrew Lane standing near with a rake in his hand, and listening with an amused grin on his wrinkled old face. He nodded, but did not touch his battered straw hat, and a flush crept over Uncle Peter's cheeks; this man was always rude to him.

"Take off your hat to your betters, Andrew," he said, not without condescension. The grin spread farther, and, with open mouth, the old man laughed silently.

"So I do," he answered, advancing toward Paul and touching his hat brim. "The's a man here from Porchmouth says you wanted him."

"Bring him here," said the young proprietor. "It is a gardener who I thought could give us some suggestions about touching up the old place."

Uncle Peter stood near and listened to the dialogue that followed, a cloud gathering on his brow.

"I do not want things much changed," explained Paul to the Portsmouth man. "I wish to keep it in all essentials as it was in my father's day, but it could be made a little trimmer."

"Yes, sir, yes," assented the man, handling his pruning shears.

"It ought to look more as if it were inhabited by the living as well as by the dead," thought Paul.

When the gardener had gone, Uncle Peter took up again the thread of conversation which he had reluctantly dropped.

"Oh, you want to go on reading, do you? It's always books," he muttered. "Whoever you get that taste from, it is n't from

me; must be somebody on your mother's side; though, to be sure, your father had it. I, for my part, don't believe that great readers think as much as people who use their wits in observation. To a man who is capable of carrying on a sustained train of thought, everything in the natural world contributes something to his idea. Now to me the very birds on the trees, and Belinda when she scrubs, and the butterflies and the grasshoppers teach something of heredity."

Here he trotted away, but presently was back again, his early mood of cheerfulness changed to deep gloom, and he inquired suspiciously how much was to be paid a day to this new gardener, and how much to the mason whom he had found mending the wall.

"It 's absurd, Paul," he burst out suddenly, "that the management of my property should have gone to you. Why, I can remember when you wore dresses and had a curl on the top of your head."

"It was father's wish," answered Paul briefly.

"He was foolish, as foolish as his father and mine before him," answered Uncle Peter, irritably tapping the piazza step with his cane. "Why was the bulk of the property left to John, anyway, when I was the oldest son, and only an allowance to me? Why was your father to manage even that?" and the old man glared at his nephew.

"Don't you remember that grandfather had English ideas, and wanted the estate to be inherited by one son? I presume he thought you did not want to be bothered with it at all," answered Paul gently. He was sorry for the old man, and the frequent efforts that had to be made to explain to him that which never could be explained were hard for both of them.

"Bothered!" shrieked Uncle Peter. "Bothered with a little money of my own!" and he sank down into a chair, rocking furiously to and fro.

It was with a cunning expression that he inquired carelessly after a minute's silence: —

"Where do you get the money for all these improvements, my boy?"

"It does n't take much," was the answer; "there is really very little being done. There happens to be quite a surplus in the bank just now."

"Ah!" cried Uncle Peter in a tone that spoke volumes.

"You need n't be alarmed," said Paul good-naturedly. "I am not using yours. You get your allowance regularly, don't you?"

"I do, as yet," answered the old man ironically. "I wonder if you know that there is a trace of swindling in the blood? Now your great-great-great-grandfather Warren" —

"Oh, confusion seize my great-great-great-grandfather Warren!" cried Paul, too amused to be irritated, and too irritated to

be entirely amused. "If there has ever been anything but over-scrupulous honesty in the family, nobody but you knows anything about it. Go to your banker and make inquiries, if you think that I am wronging you."

"I meant nothing, nothing at all," said Uncle Peter, disappearing in the direction of the dining-room and the sideboard. "I only think it is well to be constantly on the alert against temptation. Yes, yes, my allowance came as usual this morning."

He soon came back to his nephew, evidently in better humor.

"I tell you what it is," he said gravely, "when I went in there just now it was as if a hand, my great-great-grandfather Warren's hand, were pushing me toward the sideboard."

"Perhaps I'd better keep it locked," suggested Paul. "What do you say, uncle?"

"No, no, no," answered the old man quickly. "I might come some time and find

it shut, and who can tell what spirit would enter in to rend and tear? You cannot trifle, Paul, you cannot trifle with the dead;" and with this solemn warning the conversation was over.

It touched Paul to see his mother's pleasure in the beauty that was coming back to the old home. That slope of the lawn with its great elms looked like Washington, she said one day, now that it was so smooth; only, the far street beyond was but a country road and lacked the gay life of the city. Paul said little, but listened with a certain remorse: why had they not done this before, his father and he, who had jogged on so comfortably with their own thoughts, forgetful of a woman's needs? With a gratified sense that he was busy with his father's task, the young man went about his work, judging, and rightly, that John Warren would have been glad to see these changes that he had neglected to make. Paul sent to Washington to inquire what was the best time of

the year to transplant magnolia trees, ordering some to be sent when the proper season came. Did his mother know, he asked, the place by Morningkill Brook where dogwood blossomed in the spring? He coaxed her to walk with him there, that she might find the spot and be ready when the flowers came again with their suggestion of the South. A faint little ripple of belated happiness came into Mrs. Warren's heart in those days, as her son began slowly to understand.

For Mrs. Warren's new mood the Virginia girl was partly responsible; she was much with the elder lady, coming often for a luncheon or a drive. Her scrupulous adherence to the compact she had made with Paul Warren amused him as much as it mystified his mother. Unless directly addressed, she did not speak to him, and, when listening, wore the air of one hearkening to a voice that came from far away.

"Did some one speak?" she asked, with wickedly twinkling eyes, on one occasion

when Paul had made what seemed to his mother a particularly impressive remark. How could it be that they disliked each other so much, even to the verge of rudeness, Mrs. Warren asked herself, when Paul was Paul and this girl was so charming?

"Tell me something about Miss Bevanne," said Frances Wilmot one day at luncheon, when a sudden feeling that her silence was not fair to the people who did not understand the cause made her speak to her host.

"I know nothing of her," he answered, "except that she used to be a little girl" —

"Strange," murmured the guest.

"With two long braids of pale hair, and no color in her face except in her eyes."

"Not color," corrected Frances Wilmot. "Her eyes have no color; it is only light. She looks as if she had some inner source of illumination."

Then she leaned back in her chair, gazing at Paul as if she did not see him, but as if she were looking through a mist at the

paneled door behind. This expression of interested amusement that he was wearing always irritated her.

An eager flush came into Mrs. Warren's face as she spoke.

"I hope you may meet Miss Bevanne some time here. The other day at church I invited her to come with her brother. They never were here as children, because of some old trouble, which I should like to have forgotten."

As chance would have it, they came that afternoon, when Mrs. Warren, worn out by a headache, was asleep, and Frances Wilmot, now thoroughly at home in the old house, was reading in a hammock on the piazza. Paul had gone to meet an engagement in the city, and it was left to Uncle Peter to do the honors for the family. He performed his task with a stateliness and a garrulity most amusing to the guests, whom he entertained by displaying the old pre-revolutionary Warren house, still standing behind a

clump of spruces not far away. Finding interested listeners, he began to harp upon his pet theories, and to Miss Wilmot in particular, whom he had never had so much at his disposal as to-day, he poured out his interpretations of the family history, while Mr. Bevanne and his sister were still lingering in the old kitchen. That was an intelligent and charming girl, Uncle Peter thought to himself, as she sat listening to him on the old settle by the huge brick fireplace in the parlor, vainly wishing that fate had let her talk with Alice Bevanne. He told her of his great-grandmother Anne, with her love of beautiful things, and of great-great-grandfather Warren, whose sins lived on in the family like suppressed volcanic fire.

"It all goes on quietly in the main, Miss Wilmot," he said earnestly. "It 's a good family, and all that, but there is something hot down under, and you can never tell when it is going to flame out. Grass green over the lava, you know, and then one day, hiss,

comes the eruption! Now these tendencies burst out when you least expect them: certain of them I confess to having myself, and certain others I clearly discern in Paul."

The girl smiled: it would be a delight, she thought, to see any kind of volcanic eruption that could break up the imperturbable self-possession and the reserve of Mr. Paul Hollis Warren. To Uncle Peter the smile meant encouragement, and he left his rocking-chair, coming over to sit at the girl's side that he might talk more freely; but the nearer he came the louder he spoke. His philosophy was in a specially gloomy state to-day, partly because his suspicion that Paul was about to wrong him in money matters was becoming a fixed idea in his mind, partly because he was conscious of being less fastidiously dressed than usual, on an occasion when he naturally wished to appear at his best. Frances watched him with eyes in which the look of amusement was giving way to one of distress.

How could she let this funny little old man go on saying things that nobody ought to say? How could she stop him?

"Paul's a good boy enough, but I am beginning to have my doubts about — Well, there is no use in talking; ladies are n't usually interested in business matters. He used to have the Warren temper: I remember seeing him as a child of fourteen months try to beat his brains out on the floor because he could not get what he wanted. There have been few indications of that lately, but he has the seeds of melancholia, as anybody can see. However, it is a gifted family; now you did not know, did you, that we have a poetess among our ancestors? Ellen Wilton, Mary Ellen Wilton. She wrote poems, hymns; in the house I can show you her portrait, and her book, which is bound in red velvet with gilt clasps. Such things never die out in a family, you know, and I sometimes think I have a touch of her in me. I am certainly very susceptible to — to

influences;" and Uncle Peter shook his withered little head mysteriously, as if willing to say more if asked.

To Frances Wilmot's great relief the others soon joined them, and the family psychology was for a time forgotten in discussion of interesting objects. The old spinning wheel, the old set of musical glasses, the room where the slaves used to cook their supper, and where the great crane still hung behind the grim fire-dogs, were displayed by Uncle Peter with no less pride than that which he felt in displaying the family faults.

Paul Warren missed it all. Coming home late in the afternoon, very tired, and driving slowly over the grass-grown road past the old house, he caught the sound of Uncle Peter's voice as it came rippling out through the low, old-fashioned windows.

"So I say that Nature sinned against me, for she gave me no personality of my own. She made me merely an empty shell to be tenanted by any bygone creature who

chooses to inhabit me. And do you know, I am convinced that it is the same with the others. There 's my nephew, Paul, for instance, — you must pardon me if I bring him in often as an illustration, but he is the only one I have left to study now, — I continually observe the same phenomena taking place in him."

Paul had stopped his horse, and he heard the sound of suppressed laughter that followed his uncle's words. Then came the notes of Frances Wilmot's beautiful voice: "But you know, Mr. Warren, that is all nonsense." The young man grasped the whole ironic situation, and touching his horse sharply with the whip, drove on, unobserved by any eyes except those of Alice Bevanne. He caught their look, half halted, then went his way, being in no mood to play just then the part of host.

"She will not tell them that I am here," he said to himself; and she did not.

"Oh!" exclaimed Frances Wilmot, with

a little groan of relief, as Uncle Peter, hearing the sound of wheels, hurried away to find his nephew, and left his guests alone.

"It 's as interesting as a play," said Mr. Bevanne, with a little burst of smothered laughter. "You do find the most amazing absurdities in human nature up this way."

"It was shameful," said the Southern girl vehemently. "I feel as if the family skeleton had been showing me the closet where he lives."

As Mrs. Warren entered the room, the three guests realized that the odd situation in which they had been placed had acted like a sudden flashlight in which they could read the expressions of one another's faces with an embarrassing distinctness.

X

"What did you say, Paul?" asked Mrs. Warren, gently swinging to and fro in a great veranda rocker. "You agree with me that it would be better to make up this quarrel with the Bevannes? Oh, I am so glad, so glad!" and she came over, seated herself on the broad arm of her son's chair, and lightly kissed his forehead. "Do, and forget those dreadful words your father said; it is more Christian so. You are a good boy, and always were."

Paul looked at her with thoughtful, noncommittal eyes; truth to tell he was a bit ashamed that reconciliation with the family enemy cost him so little. Could he identify himself with nothing, not even a family feud?

"It can't be done!" chirped Uncle Peter from the railing. "What gets into the blood

stays there, and you will find that the Warren-Bevanne quarrel is n't over yet."

"We can at least make the experiment," said Paul quietly.

"I was afraid you might not like their coming here the other day; I invited them almost without thinking," said Mrs. Warren.

"It was a matter of perfect indifference to me," responded the young man, with a touch of regret. "Would n't it be well to invite them to luncheon? Your friend Miss Wilmot would probably find it more pleasant with some young people about. Of course we cannot make it gay for her this summer, nor would she want that."

Mrs. Warren lightly touched her son's hair with her hand.

"'Your friend'!" she said reproachfully. "Why not yours? Why don't you like her?"

"I don't dislike her," said Paul magnanimously. "But do not try to make a young man out of me, mother; I think I must have had gray hair when I was born."

"Why, you did n't have a single hair, Paul," she exclaimed.

"I mean I had gray hair inside."

"Sometimes," remarked Uncle Peter, taking a cigar from his pocket, "sometimes, Paul, I think you are out of your mind. You say the strangest things, with the least sense in them! As for this girl, you must be blind, — but of course you always were that, — or you would see that she is one of the loveliest creatures that ever walked the earth. I declare, I wish I were thirty!"

"I 'm afraid that you have made her dislike you, Paul dear," said his mother, her hand upon his shoulder. "I notice that she never speaks to you if she can help it."

"Then it is my duty to provide her with companions whom she does like," said Paul, "and that brings me back to the Bevannes. From some remark she made I imagine she is very much interested in Alice Bevanne."

"That is odd," said Mrs. Warren; "but the brother is a very nice young man. What

frank eyes he has, and such an open manner! It would be sinful, I think, to keep our old grudges there!"

Regarding the luncheon she hesitated, glancing at her gown of black, — her fresh sense of recent sorrow causing her to shrink from even so simple a festivity as this; yet it was in behalf of peacemaking, and that gentle thought won the day. Alice Bevanne and her brother were invited to meet Miss Wilmot, and a Southern fever came upon Aunt Belinda as she made preparations.

"Honey," she said to Mrs. Warren, "kin I make beaten biscuit?"

"Of course!" said that lady, wondering at the broad smile upon the black face as the old darky fingered her lilac apron.

"An' fried chicken, an' a Smithfield ham done wid champagne? I jes' like ter show these No'the'n folks what a rale supper is, an' I know Miss Frances jes' dyin' fo' some beaten biscuit: I kin tell dat by de looks of her. All de years I bin up yer I ain't seen

no young lady like dat. Her hair jes' nach'-ally straight, ain't it?"

If any one was bored when the feast of reconciliation came, that person was not Uncle Peter. From grave to gay, he ran the whole gamut of his intellectual charms, — laughing merrily at his own jests, and wiping his eyes over his own pathetic tales.

"You don't feel these things as I do, perhaps," he said to Frances Wilmot, to whom he devoted himself. "I am peculiarly sensitive, perhaps foolishly so."

Paul Warren overheard without the quiver of a muscle, — after all, one could not bully fate! His mother mournfully remarked that he exchanged not more than a dozen words with Miss Wilmot; but Aunt Belinda, who, in her woman's desire for further knowledge, and her cook's desire to watch the appreciation of the feast she had created, had forced the table maid to feign headache and was waiting with a grace that belied her bulk, chuckled delightedly to herself as she passed to and fro.

"Mas'r Paul, he know every which way dat young lady lookin', for all he ain't sayin' nuffin'; an' her face change ebery time he open his mouf talkin' ter somebody else. I reckon dey act de way a hen an' a snake acts, jes' like dey don't know what to make ob one 'nudder."

Aunt Belinda had spoken truth, for now and then, across the sound of many voices, the Southern girl's eyes glanced toward Paul, and he became aware that there was a shade of meaning, humorous or sad, which none save he and she understood. It was as if she were drawn against her will, by some doom of nature, to share her appreciations with him, and he found himself waiting for those rare interpretations which escaped the others.

If the quiet manner of Alice Bevanne wearied Uncle Peter, when he found himself obliged to talk with her for five minutes after luncheon, her brother charmed his hostess by a slightly exaggerated attention to her

wishes, which recalled to her the young men she had known in the days of her youth.

"Mr. Bevanne has acquired the Southern manner," she said to her son when the guests were gone. "But the sister — well, she is a lady, but that is all I can say; she is singularly destitute of charm."

Paul said nothing; perhaps his mother was right, yet the glance of the girl's luminous eyes, and the depth of expression in her face, made him wonder if there were not something better than charm in the feminine world. At any rate, he found in her a refuge from her brother, whom he treated with an excess of courtesy that boded dislike on further acquaintance. Searching for a cause for this desire to keep a measured distance between himself and Alec Bevanne, he failed to find it. To the best of his belief it was not the old enmity, which in all earnestness he was trying to end; he could detect no reason save an instinctive difference in taste.

"Five hundred years ago," Paul said to himself as he strolled up and down the walk late in the afternoon, "I suppose I should have killed the man simply and perhaps devoutly for the sake of the feud, and a hundred years ago I should have fought a duel with him, but now I have no impulse except to be decently polite to him, and to keep out of his way. No family quarrel ought to be intrusted to a man with a sense of humor!"

Truth to tell, Paul Warren was sore over a lack of grievance. Alec Bevanne had not, as he had expected, overwhelmed Miss Wilmot with his attentions, but had had the good taste to spend his engaging efforts on his hostess.

"I declare!" said Paul to himself, stopping abruptly in his walk, "I believe I am sorry that the man is not a cad!"

In the summer days that followed, these four people were much together. From the gay life of the few guests at Wahonet, Fran-

ces Wilmot was cut off by her sorrow, as the Bevannes were by their poverty, and as Paul Warren was by his own desire. The latter, from his apathy in regard to human beings, whose presence usually roused in him a feeling of loneliness unknown in solitude, wakened to a certain interest in his new friends.

One morning there was a prolonged knock upon Mrs. Warren's door, and when permission was given, Aunt Belinda entered, gorgeous in yellow calico, but wearing an expression of alarm that seemed to blanch still further the whites of her eyes and her gleaming teeth against their dusky background.

"Mis' Emily, whar 's Mas'r Paul gone, wid all dem picks and spades?" she demanded.

"Picks and spades!" repeated Mrs. Warren, looking up from her writing desk with mild surprise upon her face.

"Yes, honey, picks *and* spades," repeated

Aunt Belinda tragically. The voice, soft and deep, ran the words together in a long, mournful, cadenced wail which sounded like the expression of an animal's grief.

"I never see no sech goin's on sence I came up yer. Mas'r Paul's paw never touched none of them things; now he bin an' gone an' pruned de laylock bushes, workin' jes like any field han'. Look out o' dat winder an see him now!"

Mrs. Warren rose and looked anxiously out. There, striding across the July fields with a quicker tread than that of his old solitary tramps, was Paul, carrying over one shoulder a bundle of golf clubs. A happy smile crossed the mother's face.

"Why, Belinda!" she exclaimed, "that 's not work! It is golf, a game."

"A play game?" asked the colored woman skeptically.

"A play game, yes," answered Mrs. Warren, laughing joyously, "and you must be as glad as I that at last he is getting

interested in the things that belong to his years."

A broad smile illuminated Aunt Belinda's dark face.

"Co'se I 'se glad," she said heartily, "ef it's a play game, sho 'nuff, but it looks mighty like it was common work to me."

But as the days went on, the old colored woman watched him with delight.

"Mas'r Paul jes' wakin' up to know he 's alive!" she muttered one day. "Jes' readin', thinkin', what 's dat for a *man!*"

It was true that Paul Warren found an unwonted charm in things hitherto obnoxious, sharing an occasional drive, on which, through all the talking and the laughter, he heard cadences of one voice sweeter than the rest; or a long tramp over some winding road shaded from the sun by drooping branches, where, between dark tree trunks, they watched the sunlit green on the fields beyond. Whole occasional days were devoted to enjoyment; dust gathered on the

library table, and Robin, stealing in unobserved on his old quest, chewed up the second and third heads of an essay on Herbert Spencer. When at last he invited his friends to share with him the one amusement of his old days of solitude, sailing across the waves in his cherished Sea Gull, it seemed to his mother, as well as to himself, that the last wall of his reserve was breaking down. He awakened often in the morning to a wonderful lightness of heart, which sometimes lingered with him through the long summer hours, and old troubles grew to be at times like half-forgotten stories of childhood, which it was hard to recall. For the first time in his life, Paul Warren made a truce with his soul.

Between him and his mother's friend, the Southern girl, was an armed peace. Upon all about him she had laid her spell. Uncle Peter frankly rendered her the homage of his withered heart; Mrs. Warren was living again in her a girl's life, and one happier

than her own had ever been; Aunt Belinda still cherished with devotion the look which had greeted her beaten biscuit; and Alec Bevanne wore his admiration as an open secret in his blue eyes. Only Robin Hood and Paul withstood the enchantress, the former with the expression of accusing grief wherewith he repelled all humankind, the latter with a rather strict observance of the compact of silence, for certain moments in her presence had brought him a sharp sense of danger, and a more formal courtesy was wont to mark his efforts to keep out a foe who might disturb the little inner quiet he had achieved. Yet their surface intercourse in the presence of others was full of charm for him, and in minor matters he submitted to her management with a meekness which no one had ever before discovered in him. It was she who undertook his education in golf.

"You think too hard about it," she said laughingly one day. "Just go by instinct

and strike. You play too intellectual a game, Hamlet!"

In spite of his obedience in the matter of golf-playing, of which he knew nothing, and in the matter of riding, which he understood better than she, he left Miss Wilmot usually with a puzzled sense that he was master of the situation. Through all the silences, a sense of his splendid gift and his strength was strong upon her, perhaps because of the enigmatic eyes which watched and studied, for the man's mind was hard at work upon this baffling personality which he did not comprehend. It might be because he knew nothing of women that she puzzled him so, yet he half divined the fact that no other woman would puzzle him as this one did. A minute's conversation with her on some rounded height of the green golf course, or under flickering sunlight and shadow at the turning of a woodland way, sometimes came as a flash of light, revealing her sane, sweet, and strong, — one who would face loneliness

and gayety and pleasure and hurt with the same fearless eyes, winning joy from the heart of pain; the next minute she was her old, elusive self again, escaping.

"I am a problem to which there is n't any answer, Mr. Warren," she said one day, quietly watching him as he watched her. "Don't try to think me out! If you get the answer and put down your analysis correctly under heads one, two, and three, it will not be right!"

So gentle, yet so spirited, so keen in judgment, yet so quickly touched to sensitive feeling, young in many ways, yet at some points older in wisdom than Mother Eve and the serpent together, he said whimsically to himself, — would no one read him the riddle of this woman?

Those rare moments of silent understanding came oftenest when, dancing over the waves in the Sea Gull, with the spray in their faces, the joy of swift motion in the girl's eyes, the rhythm of her body, the

sweep of her wind-blown hair, thrilled him with a new sense of the meaning of the words she had spoken half in jest about her living at the heart of the great tides.

XI

HATLESS, short-skirted, with brave, swinging step, two girls were walking over the wide upland of the Wahonet golf course, clubs in hand, intent on the game. Ahead, the long grassy slopes were broken here and there by the sharp outlines of slim cedar trees, giving, in the way the dull green cut the blue, a suggestion of Italy's cypresses standing against a sky of deeper tone. Far and near they grew, trooping in long lines up the side of a hill, or standing by crumbling stone fences, and they lent a certain poignant charm to all the landscape. One of the least cedars of all grew invitingly near a great flat gray rock, half buried under running blackberry vines and low fern. The temptation was too much for Frances Wilmot, and she sank down on the stone in

happy weariness, leaning gratefully against the little tree.

"Do you think anything bad will happen if we rest a few minutes?" she demanded, and by way of answer Alice Bevanne followed through the fern tangle and sat down by her side. Frances noted with delight that the girl's fair hair and faintly flushed cheeks looked somewhat demoralized by fresh air and exercise.

"Why is it," Alice asked shyly, "that you always bring an atmosphere of your own to everything? It seems to me that you live apart in a world of wonder and mystery, where the beautiful things come true."

"I live in the same world you live in," said Frances Wilmot, laughing, and placing on the pale hair a poet wreath of green fern leaves; but the crowned head shook in slow dissent.

"You have some enchanted sense of things, and you would be just like the princess of the fairy stories if" —

"If" —

"You are too wise. You look like the princess, but I am more like her inside, for I can only feel, and you can think, too. And then you change too much for the princess, for she always wears the same sweet smile, while you are never quite the same twice."

"Perhaps I have a touch of the dragon and a dash of the old witch," suggested Frances.

"You are different with different people," said Alice sagely. "With me you are always sweet and serious and real, but when other people are near you keep saying little keen, humorous things as if you were n't in earnest, and I always wonder why."

"Nature, little Alice," said the Southern girl, bending to kiss the parted hair, "has given to each animal some protective armor: to the tortoise, its shell; to the porcupine, its quills; why should woman be left defenseless?"

"There!" cried Alice triumphantly, "that is just the look I mean. It is the expression you have — well, when you talk to Alec, for instance."

"I did not know it," said Frances Wilmot gravely, and even as she spoke she saw him far off on the green slope, coming slowly toward them. They waited in silence on the rocks, watching.

To Alice Bevanne the sojourn of this Southern girl at the Emerson Inn was like a dream come true. She had lived the twenty years of her life in an old yellow house on a crossroad, set, with a row of locust trees at one side, at the end of a driveway of broken poplars. Year after year the paint had worn away from the house, and the branches had fallen from the scraggly trees. Prosperity had long deserted the Bevanne homestead; what little money there was had to be devoted to Alec's education, and there was not enough even to send the fair-haired daughter of the house

to boarding-school. All that was left her the invalid mother bestowed upon her child, — the training of a gentlewoman, and her hardly acquired sense of the peace of letting go.

Frances Wilmot, one of the rare women on whom the gift of happiness and the gift of sympathy have been bestowed at the same time, had divined the whole story after one quick glance at the worn carpets and the pale faces of mother and daughter, and Alice was brought to share, so far as was possible, the Southern girl's free life of wood and shore. Frances must have some one to ride with her; would Alice mind learning? The woodland roads were surpassingly beautiful, and Mr. Phipps happened to have in his stable one horse that would be just right for a beginner. Alice made merry with the guests who danced in gowns of pink or white or green at the Inn under the dull rafters in the evening, or tossed out over the waves in white-sailed boats, following the flight of

the gulls, or drove through long mornings by hidden roads where ferns dipped their pale green fronds into tiny brooks trickling over the wayside rocks. No motion that her hostess made escaped her; the young girl's eyes followed her with a look that enveloped her as with sunshine. Whether she wakened the place to music, or arranged flowers in just the right places, — great bowls of yellow roses against deep blue or dull green portières, or clusters of fern against the yellow wall, — Alice Bevanne watched and understood. Color and fragrance and beauty flooded the starved little life.

"Who owns all this?" asked Frances Wilmot, as the young man strolled up, fresh and smiling in his well-cut golf suit of gray cheviot.

"Oh, our friends the Warrens," he answered, throwing himself upon the grass near by. "Nearly half the county belongs to them. I used to call the estate 'Bare-acres,' after Thackeray, you know, only I spelled it

B-e-a-r. To tell the truth, the elder Mr. Warren was something of a bear. And speaking of the Warrens, it is a great pleasure to us to think that such friendly relations have been established; I cannot help feeling that it is in some way partly due to you. They are old enemies of ours, hereditary, you know; it 's a sort of a Montague and Capulet affair."

"If you go on like this," said Frances, with the sudden flash of her smile across a face alive with mischief, "I shall have to bring a book of 'One Hundred Useful Literary Allusions' in order to understand you. I have n't a doubt I could find one at the Inn."

Then she was sorry, not because the young man's face changed, but because she caught Alice Bevanne's eyes, which always gave her a look of knowing more than she ought of hidden human motive.

"I did not know that there had been enmity," she said hastily. "What caused it? Did some very early wicked Warren lay hands on his neighbors' barns?"

Alec Bevanne shook his head.

"Nobody knows the whole story, but from early days there has been outspoken enmity, and as boys young Warren and I struck out, like many warriors of larger growth, in a quarrel which we did not understand. It has always been more or less of a mystery, though I believe it began with something akin to murder, certainly with blood-shedding."

"I think it was some dispute about land," suggested Alice Bevanne.

"It is really very nice of them to be so friendly," said the young man. "And are n't they interesting as a family! Mrs. Warren is charming."

"I won't tell him that the impression is mutual, because he ought n't to be talking about them," mused Frances Wilmot.

"I find Uncle Peter a perpetual delight as a study, and I marvel at their patience with him. Young Warren is a fine fellow. I like that touch of the ancestral bear in him,

don't you? though it is rather a pity that he has cut himself off from all social life."

"I really had not thought about it," said the girl coldly. "I'm not very well acquainted with Mr. Warren. He seems to belong to a type of man that is fast dying out; and personally I like it better than the kind that plays the guitar and reads Ouida. He is a very quiet person."

"He's tremendous down under," said Alice Bevanne, "like some smothered elemental force, perhaps a tidal wave that has n't got started."

Frances looked quickly at her with puzzled eyes.

"Pshaw!" said Alec Bevanne. "That's just what he is n't! He 's a man that has worn all the elemental forces out of himself, studying. Dresses oddly, does n't he?"

Frances Wilmot looked lazily across the sunlit field and yawned.

"Mr. Warren looks as if his ancestors had been well enough dressed to allow him

to be a bit oblivious in regard to his clothes. Let 's change the subject: don't you like these old rocky, fern-haunted New England fields, with their 'gadding vines' and their silences? There is nothing like them anywhere."

A tiny wild rabbit crept round the edge of a rock not far away, and stood, all a-quiver, with front paws slightly lifted, gazing with eyes that begged to know if danger were near. Catching those of Alice Bevanne, it stood, transfixed, and then came softly forward as if it had found there an invitation too sweet to be withstood. The beckoning motion of the girl's white hand, however, startled the little wild creature, and it ran a few steps, looking back over its shoulder with a glance that she could not resist, and she was off, halfway across the field, following the gay feet of her new friend as they leaped capriciously here and there.

"Alice was always like that," said her brother, as the two watched her. "She can

tame anything under heaven. I fancy she will come back with bunny riding on her shoulder."

"I don't wonder," said the girl. "I should go to her if I were wild."

"Miss Wilmot," said the young man abruptly, "may I consult you on a personal matter? I know I ought not to intrude, and yet I trust your insight completely."

"Do you?" said the girl, surprised, and off her guard.

"More than you know," he answered warmly. "You know how matters are with me: I'm in a small place where I have n't half a chance, but where I've taken a certain hold, have got a sort of influence, you know."

He looked inquiringly at her; she nodded, and moved the slightest bit farther away upon the stone.

"Now a good chance has come for me to go to a larger place. It means everything, from the point of view of ambition, you

know: more money, wider scope, and, something for which I care very much, charming social life. But the mud-stricken little town down in Alabama haunts me; I mean something there, and a few hungry souls have been good enough to say that I mean food to them. Now, what shall I do?"

The bright blue eyes were full of eloquent appeal; the whole face quivered, perhaps partly with a sense of the moment's dramatic value.

"I think, Mr. Bevanne," she said slowly, "that the question is one which you ought to ask your own soul and not mine."

"But a woman sees so much more clearly the spiritual values of things," he answered, wondering at finding a feminine conscience which refused to act as leader to the man in a moral crisis.

"I think, from the very way you have told me, that you see the spiritual values here very clearly."

"Perhaps I need a little moral impetus,"

he answered. "And I thought you might be interested; it is the South, you know."

"I should be sorry to bring undue influence to bear on a man in making him decide the right," said the girl, smiling. "It is a pity to deprive anybody of a chance to show what strength is in him."

It was Alice Bevanne, coming back without the gray rabbit, who rescued him from the embarrassment caused by a girl's refusal to take a personal attitude toward his predicament; and the rescue was no less grateful to Frances than to him. She rose, holding out both hands to her friend.

"You have saved us from abstractions; now let's use our muscles."

The caddy rose from the ground, where he had been lying at a discreet distance, shouldered his burden, and led them to pastures new.

XII

LAZILY Paul Warren paced the garden paths, his hands loosely clasped behind him, warm sunshine on his untroubled face. To the young recluse these summer days were like the coming in of sudden light on life, for it was as if, from mazes and tangles of the mind, he had chanced suddenly upon a world of beauty, where unseen paths lay clear. The rare sunlight of a yet undiscovered youth dawned for him on sea and distant mountain toward the north, and the dear green meadows between; and he sniffed the roses about the old porch with the feeling that a new sense had been granted him. Slowly he was learning to understand all things that live: the old dog, stretched out on the sun-warmed step; the cows, wandering over fresh green grass, or standing knee-

deep in placid water; the wood thrushes calling to each other in the cool of late afternoon. There was an amazing simplicity, after all, about the great lesson of beauty; and the old, old, elemental truths, which had been true all the time he had been thinking, were his at last.

The woman who had roused him from his melancholy was naturally much in his mind; and when he met her by the box border of one of the ancestral flower beds, he was hardly conscious that the picture in his mind had changed to that of actual vision.

"I am afraid that I am intruding," she said as she faced him. "Some one told me that you were not at home to-day."

"You never intrude," he answered.

"The Lady from Boston wanted to make a polite call, and I came with her. I've escaped for a few minutes to see about a fern that Andrew promised me. I am very fond of the garden, you know."

"Women and gardens," he observed,

"have always had a peculiar affinity, from the dawn of time."

She did not deign to answer him for a moment, but stood, silently fingering the petals of a great tiger lily, which grew erect and tawny among its fellows.

"That reproach," she said at length, "comes badly from either man or the serpent. Which part are you playing?"

By way of answer he merely laughed, and side by side they wandered down the long path in silence. It was a hazy July afternoon, a day for the weaving of dreams or the casting of spells. Through the warm air came the murmur of bees, and the wind that touched the eyelids was fresh and sweet from the sea.

"What are you thinking?" asked the girl at length.

"I was merely wondering," he answered, stopping by a row of sweet peas that fluttered like butterflies pausing on wings of purple or rose color or white by the dull cedar

hedge, "if Adam saw the flowers of the Garden before Eve was created."

"Perhaps the apple blossoms," said Frances mischievously, and with that they came to an old apple tree, standing, gray-green, against a soft blue sky, its branches alive with the murmur of wind and of sea.

"Did it ever occur to you, Thinker," she demanded, "that the tree of knowledge was not the tree of life? Did you know that there were two in the Garden of Eden?"

"No," he admitted. "I was taught but one."

"I thought so!" she cried triumphantly. "That partly accounts for you. But they were distinct and separate, and, so far as I can tell, our forefathers and foremothers might have gone on forever eating of the tree of life if they had not eaten of the tree of knowledge first. Oh, I can forgive them for eating, but I cannot forgive them for choosing the wrong tree."

He plucked a little hard green apple and gave it to her.

"Serpent!" she said, as she turned it over and over in the palm of her white hand. "Knotty, and hard, and sour, from the tree of knowledge. If they had only known enough to nibble one wee bit from the leaves of the tree of life!"

"Living forever in a garden would have been a bit wearisome, would n't it?" he ventured.

"Living, no!" she said, with a little stamp. "Thinking, groping about, yes. Please shut your eyes."

He did so.

"What do you hear?"

"Bees, and soft waves, and a voice that is like music."

"What do you see? Keep your eyes shut."

"A shimmer of blue and of green, with the flowers of the garden resting against it; and what else I see I shall not tell."

The girl nodded with satisfaction.

"You are coming to your senses, Ghost," she said. "I mean, in the real, not the usual, acceptance of the term."

Not far from the apple tree, in a quiet corner where a few straggling scarlet poppies burned on the summer air, was an old wooden rustic seat, and Frances Wilmot dropped into it with a sigh of pleasure.

"The Lady from Boston has n't finished looking over the old punch bowls yet: do you think she has?"

"I am sure she has not," said Paul Warren, sitting down on the grass, with a like sense of weariness and of delight. "Did it ever occur to you that your wisdom is based too much on mere temperament?"

"And what is your philosophy," she retorted, "but temperament — in a formula?"

He laughed, the sudden laugh of sheer pleasure that nothing but this girl's sauciness had ever won from him.

"It is a story-book day," said Frances

Wilmot, following with her eyes the motion of the slow white clouds on the horizon. "It is the kind of a day that makes you feel that beautiful things will happen: the giant will forget his plan of having little boys and girls for supper, and the dragon will dream instead of going a-hunting."

"Tell me a story," said the man, from the grass.

"I did not know you cared for them."

"You evidently do not know me," he answered.

Leaning back she pondered, the flickering light and shadow of a slim young locust falling on her bare head, and after a few minutes began: —

"Once upon a time there was a land beautiful beyond the power of the tongue to say, with soft green meadows where deep grass waved all day long in summer, and straggling fences where slim poplars stood, white, with a shower of pale green leaves against the blue sky. It had a long coast line, curv-

ing beach of yellow sand and high-piled, dull red rocks or gray between the blue of the water and the green of the meadows by the sea. Somewhere there were mountains all softly wooded, and there were loveliest pasture lands green and gray. Over it all blossomed flowers, crocus and violet and mayflower in the spring, and pink wild roses and scarlet poppies in summer, and goldenrod with the coming of fall.

"Now, it was a land on which there was a spell. Some old irony of the gods lay across it like a mocking smile, and its beauty of color and of sound when the sea sang round it and the wind murmured in the trees — beauty to the breaking of the heart — was holden from the people who lived there. The fates which preside over the puzzles of men's hearts had set this folk to weaving little webs all out of their own brains: little gray gossamer webs which they kept tying, tying across their eyes; fine little webs of brown which they kept weaving, weaving

across their ears; heavy webs of slaty drab with which they covered their fingers, so that eyes and ears and finger tips were blinded. Day after day and year after year they sat in their houses and spun and spun and wove and wove, all in the dark; and they moved along the sweet green leafy lanes with groping hands, and the bobolinks went mad on the meadow grasses because they could not make men hear, and the little winds sighed and wailed because men were deaf to the music that they made in the leaves, and the blue of the sky and the blue of the sea met in sorrow because men were blind. Then the fates which preside over the puzzles of men's hearts leaned back and chuckled, for of all the games that they could play they liked the Tantalus game the best."

As the girl's voice ceased, a great bumble-bee took the story up and noisily added a few remarks; a tiny yellow warbler chirped a few notes, and the little breeze in the lo-

cust whispered a few bits of story, until the man sitting on the grass continued the tale.

"So it lasted until one day a wise enchantress came wandering up the shore. She was a lazy enchantress who neither toiled nor spun, but walked idly through the meadows while all good maids and matrons were busy with their webs."

"Why did she come?" asked Frances. "I like to have everything definite in my stories."

"For mischief," he answered, "to break up the gray color and to upset the old order which was so comfortable and so even."

"Which way did she come?" There was a touch of defiance in the voice that asked the question.

"She came from the South, trailing her long robes after her; and though she was all in white, there was always about her an iridescence of color, as if her beauty broke the white light a thousand ways, to gold and violet and crimson and blue."

"I should never have supposed that you could tell a fairy story so well," said Frances, yawning.

"I am quite susceptible to influences of style," he answered, and took up the tale again.

"They called her the Opener of Doors, for every moment spent with her was like the throwing wide of doors and windows looking out on life and beauty. And her voice worked mischief with the hearts of men, for the melody of summer days had got into it: of the wind running through the deep meadow grass and making it wave in great ripples; of bees and dragon-flies humming in the warm air; of leaves on poplar tree and locust, vibrating to unseen touches; and at the sound, thoughts and feelings that had been safely shut up for years ran out through door and window, nor could any one tell that it was not wind and bee and dragon-fly that called. Then she began with her white fingers to untie the webs: the

gray webs across the eyes, the brown webs across the ears, and the slaty-drab webs wound about the fingers; and the sight of the eyes and the hearing of the ears followed the untying. There was trouble enough in the land when the old ways were undone and this woman had set her touch of wildness there; for there was pain in waking to see the color of the world and to hear its music."

"I think I don't care to hear about her," said Frances. "She was a troublesome old witch, who meddled too much with other people's affairs."

"It is not polite to get tired before the story is done," said the story-teller, watching her from the shadow of the locust on the grass; "and this one is not done, it is only begun."

"Oh, dear!" sighed the girl. "I never did like my fairy tales too long."

"Yes, she made trouble," the man went on, "for wherever she went she wakened

hunger in men's hearts: hunger for joy, for the gold light on the edge of things, for escape from the conscience-haunted, dim, gray, cobwebby world to a land where the heart would not ache with sorrow, and where tears would not come to the eyes."

"Then she was a poor, ignorant enchantress," said the girl softly, "for it is good for tears to come to the eyes: they make the vision of beauty more clear."

XIII

Robin Hood was hunting for his master. There were certain lanes and far fields where John Warren had loved to walk, which his dog now patrolled faithfully, at irregular intervals, hoping to surprise his master there at sunrise or in the late afternoon. He spent only part of his time at the house, sitting always when there at one corner of the great veranda, or lying in the grass near by, where he could watch the long driveway under the overarching elms. Very wistfully he gazed at every carriage that drew near and at the figures that alighted; never the right one came. The old dog slept lightly, starting up nervously from his dreams if a footfall sounded that had in it any echo of his master's step, and flinging himself to fuller length on ground or floor when a second echo

showed him that he was mistaken, — watching, watching, with half opened eyes. He admitted no one to his friendship, the experience through which he was passing seeming to justify his worst suspicions of mankind; and he gave but uncertain obedience to the people who issued orders to him, for the voice which he knew was right was silenced forever, and he listened to these new, unauthorized commands with a certain skeptical lifting of the ears.

One day Robin whimpered long at the door of the library, scratching with eager paws and beseeching to be admitted. Paul, who was inside, presently opened the door to him, and the old dog rushed joyfully in, sniffing at chair and table, and at the papers lying on the desk in the corner.

"Poor old fellow," said Paul, patting his head; but the dog shrank away suspiciously from the caress: not until John Warren's absence was accounted for should they place cajoling hands on him! He lay down under

the desk where Paul was busy with his father's papers, giving a little whimper now and then as the unfolding of one after another brought back to his dog-sense his master's very presence. One yellow folded paper fluttered to the floor as a bundle of letters from the farthest pigeon-hole was untied. Robin laid his paws lovingly upon it, and, stretching out his head, half fell asleep, dreaming of happier days.

Paul was going slowly through his father's papers, shrinking often from the touch, which brought with it a new sense of hurt. He could not bear the sight of the fine, soft dust already gathered there, wearing, he half fancied, a certain symbolic expression which made it differ from the dust gathered on the possessions of the living. Everything was in good order : important mortgages and deeds were in the safe built into the wall behind a swinging bookcase. Here in the desk were only old letters and documents that showed the interests and the plea-

sures of scores of years ago: faded programmes from Washington theatres of plays given there when John Warren had been congressman; memoranda of articles to be bought, — a copy of Moore's poems, for instance, and a diamond ring. Paul smiled as he read the latter item, little likely to be forgotten, and written there probably only in the lover's pleasure in putting down the words. That ring was on his mother's hand to-day. The young man found a thousand hints and suggestions that connected his father's experience with his own: bits of verse that recalled the manuscripts kept under lock and key in his own room; keen hints of criticism of books lately read, and here and there a faded flower. The look in Robin Hood's blinking eyes and that in his master's were very near akin in tenderness as the work went on; to John Warren's son it seemed as if he himself had traveled all that long way and were only now remembering.

He tied up the bundles neatly, as he had found them, and in doing so for the first time noticed the letter that had fallen to the floor and was lying under the paws of Robin Hood, who whimpered over it mournfully. The old dog growled as it was drawn away; would they take from him even this last bit of paper that bore his master's touch? As he carelessly opened it the young man quickened to sudden interest and read it, half protesting with himself against his own act. He looked at the signature, and re-read it, then sat gazing at it with the expression of a man on whom light had fallen where he had been groping in the dark.

It was an impassioned love letter, — apparently a first avowal, for the words came thick and fast as if they had long been choked back, — from the father of Alec Bevanne to Mrs. Warren. It bore the date of the year of her marriage, and must have been written when she was a bride, and when Frederick Bevanne was still a bachelor.

"Whatever you may say of right and wrong," the hot words ran, "and I know by the look of your sweet face that you will have much to say, I know only this: I cannot live without you, — I cannot, I cannot. If I may not be near you, always, while I breathe, I shall fling myself into the ocean. If you will come to me and escape from the prison in which you are shut, I will make your life a long dream of beauty."

Paul turned the letter over and over in his hands, and caught sight of a brief memorandum on the back, written there in faded ink: "Brought me by my wife."

John Warren's son started as if smitten by a blow, and a thrill of fear ran along his nerves. What might have been, what had been, the effect of this insult upon his father, whose sense of honor had been keen to morbidness, whose anger, when roused, had been unappeasable? Robin's vague sense of trouble, stimulated by the look on his young

master's face, broke out into a mournful howl whose echoes sounded full of memories of old quarrels, fierce and never ended. The very clock in the corner seemed touched by the mystery, and ticked away in solemn questions, to which no answer came. Paul searched pigeon-hole and corner for further records which might throw light upon this one, and, finding nothing, almost groaned in relief, glad not to know what had befallen. At last he half understood the look upon his dying father's face, and knew that this had been placed among offenses not to be forgiven.

He picked up the letter in gingerly fashion and flung it into the fireplace, then touched it with a match and watched it turn to black tinder, marveling as he did so at that hot Gallic blood to which love had been as a quick flash in the pan, dangerous, but probably soon over; then he shrugged his shoulders with a gesture of relief. What had he to do with the Bevannes, with old

quarrels and old mistakes? Nothing, and less than nothing. All this had gone away into oblivion, and he would keep no record of refuse bits of experience which were fit for nothing save to be cast out and thrown away. Why must the shadow of the past fall so persistently on present days, he asked himself with a touch of irritation? What could burn away from his memory, as the flame had burned the letter, the needless and meaningless pain of all his life? To the awakened soul within him it seemed as if brave days and kindly deeds and long sunlit spaces might be his portion if but the impossible could happen and he could forget.

Outside it was full summer, with all its splendor of deep leafage, of wide fields of golden, ripening grain, and of wild red August lilies blooming in the wayside grass; but in the heart of the man it was earliest spring, when the first flush of color comes to the topmost twigs, and a ripple of pale green runs along old boughs. He dimly remem-

bered, as one recalls something observed but not understood, how April came to the old house, stealing in sweet odors down long passageways, and flinging her banners of pink blossom from the decaying peach trees in the garden. A sense came to him of green springing about the feet along worn pathways, of new flickering shadows on tender grass, of the beat of bluer wings against the blue. An April mood came knocking at the doorways of his soul, crying out that the past should be but the rich soil in which delicate things might bloom for him, while life became as sudden song from the old eaves at dawn.

He roused himself from his reverie with an apprehension of danger. Must he not bar window and doorway to shut the intruder out before it was too late? He paused, in his hand a faded flower that had fallen from his father's papers, and something thrilled through him as the wind thrills through poplar leaves, making music there. His

father had been free to love; why not he? Ah, no, he was apart from other men and must abide his fate! What had he to offer that radiant creature, whose voice was as earth's hidden music made audible, and whose dusky hair made a dark glory against the blue of the sky, save the gloom of these old walls, a moody and discouraged lover, and Uncle Peter? The race was run out, Paul told himself, leaning back in his great leather chair, the old unreasonable habit of accepting the past as final in his life being too strong to break. They had never in their best days made happy homes, these Warrens; now he — the last of all, on whom the blighting melancholy of the family had descended, he who was impotent to achieve or to care greatly about achievement — would never ask where he could never give.

Would young Bevanne win there, he asked himself, for he had long ago divined the secret all too easily betrayed by the ardor of his young neighbor's eyes. Paul grew hot

at the thought, then reflected, not without satisfaction, that a comparatively obscure young college professor would have little chance of winning the Southern beauty. Why was it, he impatiently asked himself, clasping his hands behind his head and thrusting an ottoman away with his foot, that when he fancied himself ready to go out with the olive branch to his father's old enemies, this persistent distrust of the present representative of the family waxed and grew? The very thought of his young neighbor roused dislike. He objected to the blue eyes, the over-ready smile, the professional vocabulary of long words, the slightly exaggerated courtesy. Paul smiled at himself, becoming for the moment a disinterested spectator of the workings of his own mind. Was his father's fiery indignation against the Bevannes descending upon him, who had all his life long watched it with a feeling of amused pity?

Again he came back to his own problem,

resolved to reason the matter out once for all with his own soul. Of his morbidness in shrinking from the full measure of human existence his intellect was fully aware, yet this did not keep him from a resolve to withhold his hand lest in touching sacred things he should too greatly fail. It was no renunciation of a meagre nature, but of one rich and full, smitten now with a man's hunger and thirst. Aware of the folly of scruples in an age when greatness of success seems proportioned to lack of scruple, and cursing himself as a Puritan born out of his time, he faced his inner fear, — fear of bringing misery where most he loved, of handing the terrors of the past down to unborn generations to whom life might come as a curse. Wearily he trod his old circle back to his starting-point, wondering again at the deep irony that from those to whom the doing of the right was the one supreme thing the right should be veiled beyond human ken.

"Give us more insight, O Lord, or less,"

he groaned aloud, and Robin Hood blinked in understanding.

Yes, he would retire to the innermost recesses of his soul: drawbridge and moat and barricade should be made ready to repel this foe. Then, after fleeing thither, manlike, he courted danger, and came out for parley and for conference, yearning to feel the thrill of peril, and dauntlessly brooding over the quiver of Frances Wilmot's mouth, the rustle of her gown. Think! He could not think! Reason and will had departed together; young tendrils seemed touching eye and ear; unseen blossoms opening just beyond his vision; and all along the trodden paths of thought hid violets in sudden bloom.

XIV

THERE was an almost paternal solicitude in the feeling of Paul Warren toward Alec Bevanne, after reading the letter which had betrayed the tragedy of thirty years ago. Sympathy with his own father, whose heart's core had been eaten for so long a time by hidden hatred, mingled with anxiety for this young neighbor, with his inheritance of weakness and of treachery; and the measure of his pity for the son was the measure of his contempt for the father. For one with a taint like that in his blood the fight toward high standards of honor must be hard indeed; a keener anxiety than he was wont to feel regarding the inner problems of other people possessed him in the presence of this man.

It was a day of a long sail and of a picnic

on a white sand beach a dozen miles away. Mrs. Warren had begged for it; there were peculiar shells to be found there, and the breakers were fine; did not Paul think that everybody would like it? Mr. Bevanne had said that it would be charming. Paul, inwardly groaning, made ready with a cheerful face: it was not for him to check, even by a look, the gayety of fifty years. Thus it happened that he found himself piling sticks in company with the son of his father's old enemy, and peacefully boiling water in a copper saucepan over the flame that leaped high from the level sand, flickering against the blue; and he smiled grimly as he took his turn in stirring up the fire with a long oaken staff.

"This is what Christianity and civilization have brought us to," he said to himself, humorously watching the handsome pink face and the smiling blue eyes. "Instead of my steel at his throat he finds my sandwich in hand, and munches with the happy abandon of six years."

Gentle pleasure beamed from Mrs. Warren's sweet blue eyes as she watched her son; she had never learned to discriminate between his smiles. The new tenderness in his manner toward her lent warmth to the sunshine, and she thrilled with the thought that he and she were making these people happy, — happy in the old way of her girlhood. Unhesitatingly she bade them spread her dainty damask on the white sea sand, and she recklessly placed upon it fragile cups of white and gold taken from an old-fashioned wicker basket. The thin, rosy, flaky ham, the firm, white chicken, the great plums with violet bloom, the early, ruddy peaches, and, above all, the fragrant coffee, satisfied the standard of her earlier days as to what a picnic should be. A rare flush of excited pleasure stained her cheeks: she was glad that Mr. Bevanne was having such a good time devoting himself to Miss Wilmot, whom Paul was treating with marked neglect. A girl like that ought always to have young men at her feet.

It was Uncle Peter, however, to whom the occasion brought the greatest intoxication of delight; he enjoyed himself even enough to talk with Alice Bevanne.

"You — are n't interested in heredity, I believe," he said, as he nibbled the last crumbs of his luncheon from his fringed napkin, and looked up at her as she sat above him on a throne of sand.

"Oh, yes, indeed I am," she answered.

"I 've never heard you speak of these matters."

"I 'm interested in many things that I don't speak of," she said, laughing.

"Now, I 'm not," asserted Uncle Peter stoutly. "I believe in opening out to your kind, in giving all you have. Well, you have some splendid bits of history in your family. There 's French blood there, as of course you know. You are naturally acquainted with the story of your ancestress who played so heroic a part during the Revolutionary War?"

"Yes," said the girl.

"Tell it," begged Frances Wilmot from her pile of sand, but Alice Bevanne shook her head.

"Mr. Warren must tell it; I should only spoil it."

Uncle Peter was only too ready.

"Why, one of the ancestresses of this young lady — let me see, it must have been her great-great-grandmother — defended a house for a couple of hours against the redcoats and fired again and again with her husband's old shooting rifle. Came out of it with her hair partly burned off and her face all smoked, and fell on her husband's neck with her baby in her arms when the rescuing party came; then she fainted. Touching story, isn't it?" Uncle Peter passed a silk handkerchief across his eyes. "I — I feel these things very much myself."

"That 's a beautiful story!" cried the Southern girl.

"What did that woman look like?" asked

Paul, glancing at Alice Bevanne as she sat with her fine profile and smooth, parted hair silhouetted against the blue water.

"How should I know?" answered Uncle Peter indignantly. "I was n't alive. You youngsters all think your elders were witnesses of what happened before Methuselah was born!"

"There are pictures, you know," suggested Paul apologetically.

"Oh, that is what you mean! Well, I cannot tell you, but I fancy that she did not look much like this young lady."

"*I* fancy that she did," said Frances Wilmot.

"Imagine her firing a gun!" jeered Uncle Peter, looking at the girl's slender hands that hung loosely in her lap.

"I can fancy her firing a gun, or a powder mine, if it were necessary," said the Southern girl saucily; "not that she would do it for pleasure."

Uncle Peter shook his head as he rose.

"I am afraid that you have not a very deep insight into character; one would hardly expect it of a young lady with so many charms," and he made a deep bow. "Now the reading of character is one of my strong points, and I can see in Miss Bevanne a most devoted domestic personage, but hardly a warrior."

The girl was looking at them with her humorous little smile, aloof, as if she were the last person to be concerned in this discussion of herself, in which she claimed no place, even by the quiver of an eyelid.

They turned and went their several ways, to walk on the firm sea sand or to climb the heights beyond the beach. It was a brilliant day, clearest, bluest of all, and the crisp air stung freshly on brow and cheek, while out and out, far as the eye could reach, the great, even breakers came rolling in, falling into white foam, — the nearer ones translucent green, the farther purple-tinged. As close to the ripple of the waves as she could safely step

went Frances Wilmot, gathering, from wet sand or dry, frail white wave-beaten shells, and holding them in her hands with a fine sense of their symbolism. Her sea treasures she heaped at the feet of Mrs. Warren, who sat shading her eyes as she looked out over the great water, wondering why it seemed so much more beautiful and more friendly than of old.

Meanwhile, wilted and wan, to the top of the grass-grown promontory at the left wearily climbed Uncle Peter, for the gay mood was gone, and the droop of the wrinkles at the corners of his mouth betrayed the inward man. Always black melancholy sat croaking near, ready to flap her raven wings at slight provocation about Uncle Peter's head, for a time, at least, and she was flapping them lustily now, because of Paul's careless question. Paul had broken in upon a mood that was all compact of youth with an inquiry which suggested in him remote age, and this in the presence of Miss Wilmot! It

was not all resentment against Paul, however, which filled his thought: this momentary conviction of age always brought with it a sense of a life spent without its proper dues.

It was at the top of the cliff that he met Alec Bevanne, who was having a brief run for exercise, and who stopped, panting, a vivid red coming and going in his cheeks.

"Are n't you feeling well?" asked the young man, halting as he saw the other's face.

"As well," answered Uncle Peter, out of the gloom, "as a victim of both God and man could be supposed to feel."

"Now, Mr. Warren, what have you got against God and man?" asked Alec Bevanne good-naturedly. He liked Uncle Peter, and always found any kindness shown him more than repaid in amusement.

The old man folded his arms, unconsciously taking the attitude which he had more than once seen assumed by the villain on the stage.

"God has given me an undeserved inheritance of — of tendencies," he remarked, "and man has taken from me the possessions that were mine by hereditary right."

Alec Bevanne slipped his hand through the misanthrope's arm.

"Great-great-grandfather Warren troubling you to-day?" he asked jocosely.

"He is always troubling me," said Uncle Peter. "In my soul of souls I feel him crouching, ready to spring."

"Well, what about your other trouble? Pour it all out, and you will feel better."

The words were comforting, and the wavering mind of Uncle Peter wavered assent.

"It is something I would not tell everybody, but you have a face to be trusted. I should confide in that face if I met it disembodied in the Desert of Sahara!"

"All right! Go ahead!"

"It is about my property," said the old man in a whisper, "wrested, wrested away."

"How's that?" said Alec, drawing him into a brisk walk.

"Simply defrauded of my birthright, that is all, Mr. Bevånne! I was the elder son, and yet Paul's father, my younger brother John, got it all, except an annuity to me. When John died I naturally expected some readjustment of affairs, but no! The same annuity comes, and Paul, it seems, steps into his father's whole estate. There has been fraud somewhere; now tell me, whose was the fraud?"

"Oh, no! You take too dark a view of it. If I were comfortable I should not worry about might-have-beens, though I admit that it looks queer."

Uncle Peter shook his head and dragged his companion into a slower walk.

"There's a mystery somewhere," he said simply; "I've suspected it all my life. Little hints out of my childhood come back: for instance, I remember, when my brother John was born, — an occasion which naturally

made a great impression upon me, — going into the library and finding my father there with a tall man in black. They had some papers with them, and they stopped talking when I came in. I can remember as distinctly as if it were yesterday how my father put his hand on my head and said something about its being hard on somebody ; I presume the experience through which I was passing made me extraordinarily sensitive to receive and to retain impressions.

"'Is he bright?' the man said. My father shook his head. Until then I had thought that they were talking about me, and lately I have begun to suspect, in thinking it all over, that my first impression was right. The answer that that man made is still vivid in my mind, though it has puzzled me from that day to this: 'Then you will have less difficulty in carrying out your plan.' Now, Mr. Bevanne, what do you think of all this?"

The young man was whistling, and his eyes were filled with amused wonder. Was

this some of Uncle Peter's romancing, or had it really happened?

"I think," he answered, "that the whole thing is extraordinary, and some time I should like very much to hear more of it. But this is not a picnic mood. Down there I see Mrs. Warren and Miss Wilmot literally wasting their sweetness on the desert sand. Shall we join them?"

"Yes, by all means," assented Uncle Peter, with his wrinkled smile. "That's a charming girl! Now, if I were you!"

"If you were I," said Alec Bevanne, in sudden dejection, "you would probably be as big a fool as I am; but you are not I, so congratulate yourself."

It was while this conversation was going on that Paul Warren had climbed the high white sand dune guarding the beach, and had come full upon the tidal river that flowed here between sand-bound banks, blue toward a bluer sea. Long reeds and grasses, washed by tide waters, grew at its edge, and drooping wil-

lows dipped their pale green fronds into its intense color. There were ripples on its surface, and reeds and grasses swayed; it was a day of strong breeze, and mighty waves, and heroic moods. Idly following the motion of the water, Paul became suddenly aware that Alice Bevanne was leaning against the golden-brown bark of one of the willows not far away, and with the sight of her he suddenly remembered one of the shadows that lay for him across the sun. Unobtrusively he watched her, full of a wistful desire to atone to her, through some finer shade of courtesy, for having had a father like that. To him she was as perfect an enigma as he had ever found, — aloof, silent when he was near, she often watched him with those wonderful eyes which seemed to make her face all vision, yet persistently avoided him, probably because she could not so soon forget the family hate. Now, leaning as with the sudden abandon of utter weariness against the tree, with her hands clasped about the bark,

she was looking down into the river. Soft gleams of brown and of gold came from its pebbled depths; green reflections from the feathery leaves above quivered there, where the blue of the sky was mirrored back in softer, tenderer blue. So intent was the gaze of the girl's eyes that Paul could almost have believed her to be holding communication with some water spirit of the stream. The whole slender figure wore a curious expression, like the look he had more than once seen in her eyes, as of one who asked nothing and expected nothing, not even to understand. She had the face of one whom no fate could find unprepared.

"I must beg your pardon for disturbing you," he said, going near her. She looked up at him, unsmiling.

"You do not disturb me," she answered.

Something in the deep light of her eyes, which had failed to change so quickly the expression they had worn in gazing into the

water, arrested him, and he paused on the bank.

"Miss Bevanne," he said, and then stopped abruptly.

"Yes?" asked the girl.

"There is something that I have wanted for a long time to say to you, and it has been difficult, for we are both a little shy," he said, with a boldness which dumbfounded himself. She did not answer him, but waited. "You know something of the old enmity between your family and mine?"

She bent her head in assent, and the strange, pale gold of her hair seemed to make a light about her.

"I hope," he added hesitatingly, "that for you, as for me, it is over. I hope that you do not share the old feeling, or connect it with me?"

The ghost of a little smile flitted across Alice Bevanne's pale face.

"Why do you ask that?" she said quietly. "Do I act like an enemy?"

He was puzzled for a minute, and colored in embarrassment.

"No," he answered, and was silent. Then, as they looked at each other, the girl's eyes wore the look of one about to smile, but she did not. It was he who smiled. "I have sometimes been afraid that I annoyed you," he said frankly. "It has seemed to me that you avoid me, and I have been wondering what I could do to make myself not entirely obnoxious. To me it seems best to let old grudges die, and I should like to be friends."

She did not change color, and yet so transparent here was the veil of flesh, that her swift change of mood seemed to leave a physical record in her face.

"I have not thought of you as an enemy, Mr. Warren," she said, holding out her hand.

He took it gladly.

"It is perhaps an absurd fancy of mine; possibly it is a guilty conscience, or an an-

cestral guilty conscience, but I had thought that you rather withdrew from any matter in hand, golf or tennis, or whatever it might be, if I was one of the players."

She smiled for the first time now.

"I think that you must forget your earliest acquaintance with me. Was I not always the little sister who watched, but did not play the game?"

XV

PAUL wondered at a certain negligence in Uncle Peter's dress in these days, for the old man was something of a dandy, and vain of his irreproachable clothes. Now day after day his collar was limp, his coat was dusty, and there were wrinkles in his trousers, while his gay and egotistic pessimism was tarnished by persistent sadness. He talked little, but, by garden path or piazza corner, brooded with a frown upon his brow, forgetful of the paper novel protruding from his pocket, forgetful, almost, of the cigar between his teeth. A fixed idea was on his mind, and to that fixed idea everything in nature and in memory contributed: *he had been cheated of his inheritance;* half-forgotten words out of the past and the half-remembered expressions of certain faces

confirmed the conviction, as did the look he imagined in Paul's eyes. The injury had not pressed upon him so heavily in John Warren's day: he had stood in awe of John, and even to his butterfly brain it had seemed fitting that so strong a hand should hold the helm; but now it was different. Paul, who had been a baby before his eyes; Paul, who was in knickerbockers but yesterday, had stepped between him and his own. The feeling that the management of the Warren affairs had been given to one much younger and therefore more incompetent than himself was galling to the old man; and the sense of injury that he had felt on hearing his own father's will read, — had felt, but had forgotten in his busy thoughts and his busy reading of Ouida and the Duchess, — came back with more than its pristine force. Had not great-great-grandfather Warren played fast and loose with other people's money as well as with his own? Was it not probable, although no cases were recorded,

— of course they would not be recorded, — that there had been in the family history instances of questionable honesty? Surely, if his pages of fiction spoke truth, there was nothing so prone to trip the foot of erring man as the golden calf. He had been wronged, and through Paul's accession the situation had become unendurable; should he not devote his best energies to investigation and to undoing the harm done?

As he wondered where to begin, remembering from his favorite stories moments where the veriest trifles had become, under the working of an acute mind, irresistible proofs of guilt, it occurred to him that old Andrew Lane might be of use. Andrew had served his father, and doubtless skillful questioning would elicit valuable information without betraying the purpose; people of that class were usually dull of intellect, and slow in drawing inferences. He would begin with Andrew.

There was a touch of hauteur in Uncle

Peter's manner as he walked out into the new orchard, where the old gardener was pruning branches and twigs from young pear trees. Andrew Lane was rarely respectful, he confessed to himself, and he resolved that his own manner should strike just the balance between sternness and affability that would elicit the best results. Affability should come first.

"Good-morning, good-morning, Andrew," said Uncle Peter genially, as he drew near the spot where blue overalls and a torn felt hat betrayed the old man's presence. The workman nodded, mumbling an inarticulate reply, but he went on cutting.

"Andrew," said Uncle Peter, standing with his legs slightly apart in his conception of a manly attitude, "do you remember my father well?"

The question brought the pruning-shears to an abrupt standstill, and two shrewd old blue eyes twinkled humorously from under grizzled eyebrows.

"Yes," he nodded.

"He was a fine man, Andrew," remarked the visitor, with a sigh.

"To be sure," said the old gardener. "Glad you think so."

"Did n't you think so?" queried Uncle Peter.

Andrew pushed back his battered hat and went to work again, making little ineffectual periods to the conversation with every snip of his shears.

"He was honest," said Andrew. "Any man 's a fine man that 's honest, I s'pose."

"But was n't he especially kind to you?" demanded Uncle Peter, an edge of the sternness that he had planned as a last resort getting into his voice as he saw the old servant shaking with silent laughter.

"Whiles he wuz, and whiles he wuz n't," was the answer.

A reproof quivered on Uncle Peter's lips, but he repressed it. Diplomatists, he reflected, should use the most delicate tact.

"I wonder if you recall anything special about him the winter he died; I was in Florida, you know. Did anything strike you as unusual at that time?"

The old man's eyes pierced through the wrinkled face with penetration that Mr. Peter Warren failed to see.

"He wuz about as usual, I guess."

"Quite right in his mind, eh?"

"About as usual," answered the gardener, grinning.

The baffled questioner made a sudden move that he had not planned; at least he could make this exasperating old man take a serious view of the situation.

"I will confide in you, Andrew," he said kindly, "that doubts have been for many years stirring in my mind regarding my father's sanity when he made his will. It was very unusual, you know, very extraordinary. I thought that if you had anything of importance to tell me, I could make it worth your while."

"I guess that air will wuz all right," said Andrew Lane, going back to his work, and Uncle Peter strode away in helpless rage.

It was partly his rebuff at the hands of a menial, partly a memory of the fresh interest in Alec Bevanne's eyes when the money trouble had been suggested to him, that drove Uncle Peter to seek the companionship and the sympathy of his young neighbor frequently during the days that followed. Walking by shore or lane, they often met by accident, and there was a gate near the Bevanne homestead by which the old man sometimes went to stand at sunset. Seeing him there, the young professor would stroll out good-naturedly to meet him, and a long conversation would ensue. It was wonderful, Uncle Peter reflected, how many tastes they had in common, despite the disparity of their ages; he had not supposed that there were any longer in a degenerate world young men as nice as this. The same books, especially books of poetry, seemed to appeal

to them both; they shared the same sentiments concerning nature, and were as one man when they talked of Frances Wilmot. Uncle Peter needed no one to tell him how thirstily Alec Bevanne drank in all he had to say of her, and he took delight in repeating what she had said on this day or that while visiting Mrs. Warren, in telling what she had worn. Many of his descriptions were of a high order of antiquated literary merit. When gloomier themes presented themselves, he found in this young man almost the same interested courtesy that he found when speaking of woman, wine, and verse; and the words of encouragement were balm to a wounded heart. This charming neighbor could hardly be more interested in the situation if it were one involving his own interests, Uncle Peter thought warmly. His appreciation was delicate, — his sympathy kindly as it was rare.

Half thoughtlessly the young man drew the old one out. It was great fun to hear

him talk: nothing so interesting, so many-sided, and, withal, so futile, in the way of personality had presented itself for a long time. Uncle Peter's very vocabulary had a charm about it, with its quaint polysyllables; and his airy fancies and theories, his way of covering any plain situation or object with a dusky mist of his own morbid thought, presented constantly varying entertainment to the student of books and of human nature. The fixed idea, as it grounded itself more and more strongly in Uncle Peter's mind, began to suggest to Alec Bevanne something more than mere entertainment. Might there not be truth in the suspicion of wrong-doing somewhere? The situation was a strange one, and the old man had undoubtedly been deprived of that which, in the usual course of things, would have been his. An unformulated thought that anything meaning misfortune to Paul Warren, who could almost daily see this one woman of all the world and hear her speak, would not come amiss, lurked

low down in Alec Bevanne's mind. He encouraged Uncle Peter, clapped him in friendly wise upon the back, and told him to go on and claim his own. It was but justice that he wanted; no one could blame him for demanding that. At least he should consult a lawyer, the very best that could be found. As the old man drank hope and inspiration from the cheery words and smile, his manner grew more and more distant when he spoke to his nephew. If not actually a villain, Paul was apparently the son of a villain, and no one knew better than Uncle Peter the compelling nature of hereditary impulse.

As the days went on, the old man grew more and more restless, smoked less, and lingered longer at the sideboard; and the name of great-great-grandfather Warren was oftener than ever on his lips. Then came a morning when he did not appear at breakfast, and news was brought that he could not be found. His bed had not been used; various toilet articles and pieces of clothing had

been taken from the room; and in the deep dust of the road prints of foolish pointed-toed shoes led away in the direction of the railway station. Had anything of the kind ever occurred before, Paul asked his mother as he ate a hasty breakfast, conscious that steps must be taken at once to bring the fugitive back, but sorely at a loss to know the wisest way of beginning. Once or twice, Mrs. Warren answered, he had disappeared without warning, but it had always made Paul's father uneasy. Now Uncle Peter was too old to be trusted alone; he had probably gone to Boston, and Paul must follow as soon as possible.

The day after the disappearance, while Paul Warren was searching hotel registers and watching on street corners, Alec Bevanne drove gayly up to the Warren homestead with Uncle Peter beside him in the light carriage. He came in to make a call on Mrs. Warren, while Uncle Peter removed the dust of travel upstairs.

"We happened to meet," he said confidentially to his hostess. "I was not sure that Mr. Warren could make his way among the crowds, so I kept an eye on him, and he fell in gladly with my suggestion that we should come home together."

"That young Mr. Bevanne is a person of most delicate courtesy, Paul," said Mrs. Warren, when her son, hot, tired, and vexed, returned in answer to her telegram. "He could not have been more considerate."

Paul added his thanks to his mother's when an opportunity came, wondering, meanwhile, how he could be base enough to suspect that the obliging young neighbor had had something to do with the departure as well as with the return, yet irresistibly drawn to that conclusion by the old man's dark hints. Uncle Peter had come back from his escapade with an exasperating air of having accomplished something, and he went about cheerfully humming bits of song: as he himself expressed it, the ancestor poetess was upper-

most in him now. He vouchsafed no real explanation of his absence, merely remarking that he had had business in the city, and he dwelt much upon the attractions of his friend, Alec Bevanne, who had been of real service to him.

It was half in good nature, half in malice, that this young man spread abroad his knowledge of Uncle Peter and of the revelations that had come through him. Alec liked to share good things with appreciative listeners, and his mother and Alice were entertained, sometimes against their will, with bits of the Warren family history. Even the loungers about the post-office at Wahonet heard bits of gossip that had a relish for their ears, for the Warrens were no great favorites with the idlers at open doors.

"Mas'r Paul," said Aunt Belinda one morning as she brought in a plate of hot waffles to set before her young master, "what 's all this I yer Mas'r Alec Bevanne tellin' 'bout you all?"

Paul looked up in wonder.

"Dat low nigger dat works down to the Sunny Beach House tole me suffin' 'bout it," said Aunt Belinda, with a sniff. "Says dey 's all so'ts of things happen in de fam'ly dat you all is 'shamed of. Now I say, Mas'r Paul, dat dey all wrong. Like 'nough yo' paw and yo' grandpaw done lots ob things to be 'shamed ob, but dey wan't 'shamed of dem! Dat 's what I tole dat low nigger."

XVI

It was a bit of lovely pasture land beside the sea. Low headlands jutted out into the water, with soft hollows lying between, and the bare look of lichen-covered gray stone and shorn green grass where the herd was grazing brought to Frances Wilmot a sudden sense of the unseen beauty of the shores of Greece. So must the dun-colored cows have stood out against a sky of cloudless blue in the old great days, and even as now must the salt, sweet breeze blowing across the hollow have brought courage to hearts long turned to dust. The still blue water wore the changeless look that it bears on quiet days to those who cannot see the ceaseless stir along the beach, and swift passing beauty seemed fixed in an immortal moment. There was no sound save that of the soft step of

hoofs upon the turf, and of the cropping of grass. Noiselessly one little fishing craft, with sunlight on its white sail, and its hull dark in shadow, crept down along the shore. The girl closed her eyes to feel the full enchantment of loneliness, of silence, and of the sea, opening them to find all still the same.

A sharp little bark broke the stillness: looking up, she saw Robin Hood, pausing near her with lifted head and the old puzzled look in his eyes. What was to be done with this intruder who was so near his cows? he seemed to ask. She did not call him to her where she sat on a great gray rock in a hollow, with clustered low green fern at her feet, but watched as, with a low growl, he subsided, seating himself not far away with his back toward her and gazing into distance or into the past. If some dim thought was in his mind that he must protect this friend of the house he served, he was apparently resolved to ignore the relationship, lest she

presume. As they waited, the light across the sea and in the hollows grew more golden, and the shadow of hillock and fern-bordered rock crept farther across the grass. The sunset light falling on the one white sail, and turning water and shore to deeper and tenderer color, made her realize that she had spent the livelong afternoon sitting with the sunshine on her face, bookless, and with no occupation save the opening and the shutting of her eyes.

When Robin Hood's master strolled over the hill she felt no surprise; she knew that this was Warren pasture land, and that these great-eyed Jersey cattle belonged to the Warren herd. Moreover, at odd moments in the shifting of her dreams, she had been thinking of this man. That the result of her analysis of his character was not entirely satisfactory was seen in the seriousness that sat upon her brow. At first he did not see her; the quick swing of his step grew slower as he reached the top of the headland and

looked across the sea. What fresh sense was in his mind of the encompassing beauty and worth of the world she did not dream, but he paused, glad of the sudden feeling that the old charmed moments which had come to him at rare intervals through the past years of his life were hurrying fast upon one another now. A sense as of joy coming in like the tide across thirsty sand was in his soul, and the ripple and swish of the soft waves on the beach below seemed to be something taking place inside him. He clenched his hands for gladness at the pain of being born into the world of beauty and the world of love. Ah, it was good, with its sting, its possibilities of hurt, its certainties of knowing! Then, across his sudden vision of life glad and free as on the golden hills, yet fine and conscience-guarded, floated a memory of his mother's face, and with it a train of faces shadowed and sad, making him aware of increased sensitiveness to pain. The walls of his being had grown thinner, and

every touch from outside meant the vibrating of the soul within to the sorrow, the hurt, the joy of the world. Full of a new conviction that it was good, the groping, the stumbling, the finding of the way, he turned and saw before him in reality, as she had been in vision, the woman whose face was but his old dream come true.

They easily resumed discussion as he greeted her, for they had fallen into a way of taking up without preamble the topic they had been considering the last time when interruption had come, and the remarks of Monday were often only the completion of sentences left unfinished on Saturday.

"They were going to read aloud at the Inn," she explained presently, "and I could not stand it, so I ran away."

"You rebel daughter of a rebel South!" he answered. "Such opportunities for improvement may never come again!"

"I know it!" she admitted, and their laughter rang out through the sea hollows,

startling the wee sandpipers at the edge of the waves.

"What makes you look so sad?" asked Frances Wilmot, for, even as their mirth echoed back to them from the rocks, the shadow of the old days had fallen across the man's face, and that new sense of assured good that had so lately filled him with peace vanished in her presence, before his knowledge of his own unworthiness, and the certainty that she could never care. She was quick to note the look in his deep eyes, and the sudden, sensitive quiver of the lip.

"Nothing but destiny," he answered lightly.

"Please don't knock the heads off those ferns," said the girl, reaching to take his cane from him. "And do not talk to me of destiny! There is n't any such thing; there is nothing but the human will!" She shook her wind-blown hair from her face, looking, in her joyous energy, like the incarnation of the will of which she spoke.

"You are in a heroic mood to-day."

She nodded. "The souls of the heroes of Greece have been flitting past me in this hollow, and they have left their courage in my soul."

"There were heroic Greek women, too," he said idly, thinking that, with this stern beauty of rock and shorn grass about her, and with the touch of severity upon her brow, she might, save for her modern dress, be a bit of the olden time. Surely none could have had greater courage at the hands of fate, and he watched her, wondering. It seemed to him that within the shelter of her soul she sat weaving pain and loss and joy into a web of marvelous beauty and strength.

"Why do you go?" asked the girl.

"I can hardly claim a place among your heroic dreams."

"Don't disappear, Ghost! Do you know, I have been thinking about you."

"Why do you call me that?" he asked,

with a shade of annoyance in his voice. For some reason the old jest was beginning to jar.

"Because you are," said Frances Wilmot firmly, audacious courage dancing in her eyes.

"May I ask once for all what you mean?"

He sat down on a granite rock near by and looked at her.

"I do not know that I can tell you now; you look like a piece of your New England granite."

"Go on!" he commanded, and she obeyed.

"Because you have dropped out of your place in the marching ranks; you don't belong! You stand aside and let it all go on without you; I mean the political life of the country, and all the actual fighting with common things. You are the ghost of old New England, and you go off into the corner and associate with yourself because you do not like the kind of people you are thrown with if you try to keep your

hold on the actual. Ghosts never get their fingers soiled dealing with practical affairs: they have n't any fingers! They lead an untroubled life apart among the shades."

"Do not stop!" said Paul serenely. "Your eloquence makes me think that you have thought the matter out rather thoroughly."

Meanwhile, in the heart of the man, sang Love, in its undreamed strength: —

"*I can do all things: act, endure, achieve.*"

"Who has your father's seat in the legislature?" she demanded, her cheeks flaming with sudden red.

"An Irishman from County Down," answered the young man, "a very interesting personage, who, from the possession of a cow, and two shock-headed little barefooted girls, has risen in an incredibly short space of time to be owner of a feudal castle on the rocks, and two elegant daughters in a finishing school. You would not check the march of progress in our country, would you, or blame me if my intellectual powers are not

so much to the taste of my countrymen as are those of the gentleman from County Down?"

"You are only making fun," said the girl, "and I am in deadly earnest."

"I had not credited you with such fiery patriotism," he remarked. "Your gift had seemed rather poetic than practical."

"But it seems to me that every human being, man or woman, should have a sense of duty about matters of every day."

"I recall some sentiments of the kind myself, I think, from the copybook."

"Perhaps it is only to the very great that the platitudes of life are not platitudes," she flashed back, and he forgot his rising indignation in pleasure at the quickness of her retort. Again their laughter echoed between the hills, and her exhortation took a merrier tone.

"Oh, I've watched you, and other civilized men who are like you. The tide of life has left you stranded high and dry on your

ideals; it is an ideal that has n't any hold on the real. You stay ghosts because you are too scrupulous to live, and you associate in dim corners with the spirits of Winthrop and Endicott, Sumner and Phillips, ignoring the common people who need you. It is the very depth and strength of your nature which is keeping you from being of use."

"You must remember," he said lightly, "that the making of the Great Refusal has grown to be a family habit."

"*But that is past*," sang Love silently, "*past and forgotten forever.*"

"It does n't do any good to talk to you!" said the girl, smiling. "I pierce you through with winged words and you part like a fog, meeting on the other side. There is n't any weapon that can wound a — mist!"

"Would you mind suggesting some of the details of your plan for me?"

"I have n't made any plan," she confessed. "You certainly ought not to give

up writing, but I think you need a grip on actual life and difficulties. I should like to see you wrest your father's place from the Irishman from County Down; I should like to hear your name associated with some great thing to be done, and to see you fighting, fighting, fighting, like Achilles."

"I am quite ready," he said, smiling, "even to be dragged by the hair round the walls of Washington, but there are practical difficulties in the way, of which, apparently, you are not aware. I confess that I have scruples, for instance about buying votes, which are not shared by the gentleman from County Down."

Frances Wilmot looked at him with a swiftly changing face.

"I shall say nothing more," she declared. "I was trying to make you angry, and you sit there and look at me as a St. Bernard dog looks at a fox terrier puppy that is playing with his paws!"

As he looked at her his face was a mask

hiding the tumult of his soul. With her shyness and her daring, her lofty sureness of the goal and her airy ignoring of the path by which to reach it, was she not a very woman? His leader one minute, she lingered the next for his guiding hand, and he watched her flushed face and dimmed dark eyes, pondering on the difference between his old dull pain of brooding thought and this new joyous pain of being alive.

"*Grant deeper hurt*," pleaded Love in his inmost heart, "*and keener sting, for in it comes the very life of life.*"

A long call sounded from the brow of the hill; it was the voice of Andrew Lane, who had come to bring home the cows. At his yodel they lifted their heads, one after another, gazed meekly at him, then went back to the soft, sweet grass, grazing as if they had heard nothing. The cry had roused Robin Hood, and he made one brave dash after the herd, with all his old spirit come back to him for a moment.

"After 'em, Robin! Bring 'em up! Fetch 'em in!" cried Andrew, who stood now at the top of the hill, silhouetted in blue overalls and yellow straw hat against the flushing sunset sky.

Robin started to round in the herd in his old, skillful, collie way, then stopped, wagging his tail uncertainly, as if in doubt of his exact duty. Andrew gave again a sharp word of command, and the old dog sprang forward with a joyous bark to the very centre of the herd, scattering the cattle this way and that, and then stood quivering, unsure of his own purpose. One dun-colored cow lowered her horns, and a yearling heifer kicked out gayly at him, but he did not flinch, only waited with wistful eyes and pleading tail for a word of command that he could believe.

The two who watched from the rocks in the hollow glanced at each other with one of those looks of complete understanding that lie somewhere below speech.

"My difficulty is plainly like Robin's," said Paul Warren, with the old, ironic smile, "a paralyzing consciousness of undiscoverable duty. He is waiting for the right voice, my father's, and it never comes."

Here the dog made another sudden dash, barking at the heads of the bewildered animals, and, in confusion, they stampeded, running this way and that over gray rock and tangled blackberry vines, and ferns that gave out a pungent odor as they were broken and trodden under foot.

"No, it is I who am like Robin," said the girl, a sad mischievousness coming into her eyes. "That is just the way I dash at things, woman-like, without knowing anything about them. I regret, Mr. Warren, that I have been trying to teach you out of the depth of my ignorance, and I freely confess that I have been — pardon me — barking at your head!"

So she turned and left him, and he watched her as she climbed the rocky headland, stood

outlined a minute against the gold flush of the sky and the answering flush of the sea, then wandered the way of the moorland road that curled, grass-grown and beautiful, along the heights. Robin Hood came back and stood near his master, trying with dumb, eloquent eyes to explain, and permitting a single caress.

"You and I are rather badly off, old fellow," said Paul Warren. "You have lost your guiding voice forever, and I have found mine only to realize that I may not have it."

Musing, he paced the high, tangled cliff road that the girl had followed. She was a thing of fire and flame, with beauty of face and of soul flashing out opalwise through constant change. He might see it, as he saw the glory of sunset, but he could not keep it; and would not the inevitable swift-coming gray be all the more dreary because of the vanished gold? But, as he swung on his homeward way in the cool air, the encompassing rhythm of the sea got into his

long stride, and across the discords of his life he seemed to hear, as he would hear forever after she was gone, the melody of hers, where some sweet spirit played, touching all the strings to music.

XVII

It was the woman who began it. Down the garden paths and over the narrow space of rock and of sand that separated the flowers from the sea, she fled precipitately with wind-blown hair and skirts in which the breeze fluttered in joy of the chase. On the tiny beach within the cove she waited expectantly by the dory which was pulled up on the sand, and she looked out wistfully to the Sea Gull, which was rocking gently up and down upon the waves. The man who followed her tacitly did her bidding, though not a word was spoken as the dory was launched and rowed out over the water to the little sailing vessel. With white sail set they glided noiselessly out to the wide sea, the woman at the helm, the man whistling as he ran up the jib.

"You are running away," said Frances Wilmot suddenly, as the spray from a wave met aslant glistened on forehead and cheek.

"I am glad," rejoined Paul Warren gently, "to place my one talent at your service."

"Your talent for sailing a boat? I have often admired it."

"The one talent which you attribute to me, that for running away."

"Do you think it really matters if we go?" asked the woman, changing the subject.

"This is the game of 'follow my leader;' I am doing your bidding," answered Paul, shaking out the reef as he spread the last inch of sail in the dash for the open sea.

"I did not know the visitors," mused Frances Wilmot.

"And yet you knew enough to run away!"

"I did not stop to think," she said penitently.

"That, I believe, is your ideal course of

action, and the one that you constantly recommend to me!"

"Let's go back," pleaded the girl, half letting go the tiller, so that the vessel luffed and was struck by an oncoming wave.

"Look out!" called the captain. "The man at the helm must be sure of his own mind, and must abide the consequences of his actions! No, mother will have made my excuses by this time, and it will only complicate matters if we go back. Besides, I promised to do an errand for her at Tern Island this afternoon, and we must head for that place now. Port your helm!"

They sailed on in silence, over the dancing water, with the sweet, fresh wind in their faces, and the girl crooned her song of the tide, while new measures got into it as the green, surging waves mounted to meet them, parting gently with loveliest color and sound when the Sea Gull cut them through. This beauty, escaping through myriad fullness, how could she grasp, how endure it?

Unconsciously it had become to her the clearest symbol of that quick changefulness which lends life significance, — infinite permanence running through infinite change.

"'The heart of the great tides,'" Paul Warren repeated to himself, watching the rhythmic color in her cheek and listening to her song; and, wind and wave lending their own courage to his soul, as he took charge of tiller and sheet, he laughed inwardly, as he had often done of late, at his passing mood of causeless melancholy, for the old ghosts waged a losing fight against the strength of the sea. Why should he stand apart or dream that his lot should be less than that of other men? Nay, when the right moment came, he would venture all and try his fate, abiding gain or loss; and the man's eyes smiled gravely as Love touched the will and quickened it to faith and action.

Frances Wilmot, singing to herself and swaying slightly to and fro with the motion

of the boat, failed to read the expression of the face whose reserve was a protecting mask. The motion of the man's arms, his skill, his masterful way of meeting difficulty, gave her to-day, as always, a thrill of delight. Look and action showed him to her triumphantly as a leader of men, if the opportunity for leadership could but come, if some great force would but push him into the heart of life.

Then the face of Alice Bevanne floated before her, and in fancy she saw it as she had often seen it with her eyes, — outlined against the blue of sky and of sea, with its protecting cloud of palest gold hair, — full of delicate strength and austerity and power to endure. Frances Wilmot's breath came quickly with a thought that had often struck her before: was not the hidden fire of this girl's nature all that was needed to bring the touch of flame to the man's, who was so near akin to her in soul? Her shyness and her unwillingness to speak of him had long

ago betrayed to Frances something that she was ashamed to know: Alice loved Paul Warren, loved him to the depths of her heart, and had betrayed herself in this, that her look of renunciation was never quite so beautiful or so strong as when her eyes rested on the face of this man.

If this might be, Frances prayed wind and wave, it would mean to Paul Warren the sting of love that is salvation; and to Alice, happiness. The throb of the girl's heart as she thought of this was half the hope of joy for her friend, half something else. As for herself, — there would be left wide skies and the world of beauty, the gold of sunrise over the free sea and the sweep of the tides.

"I wish that we could have brought Miss Bevanne; she is a great sailor," said Paul suddenly, and the girl started as if he had divined her thought.

"I wish we had," she answered, cunningly adding: "I admire her more and more. It

has been worth my pilgrimage to the North to find a woman like that."

"She is certainly a remarkable girl," assented Paul cordially.

Watching him through keen, half-closed eyes, Frances Wilmot sighed; the power of these New Englanders in concealing desirable information was indeed wonderful! In silence they sailed on for half an hour more, gradually nearing a little island whose gray rocks and stunted pines rose out of the sea with an expression of primeval silence and loneliness. Running into a little cove on a sheltered side of the island, they landed at a tiny broken wharf, and Paul Warren turned toward a gray, weatherbeaten cottage near at hand.

"Will you come with me?" he asked.

"No," said the girl, "I will climb the rocks."

Above, the ragged pine trees cut the blue; beside the path dull green juniper lay warm and fragrant in the sun, and all was silence

save for the cry of the white-winged gulls circling overhead. Slowly she climbed over lichen-grown rock and pebble, stepping noiselessly, and at the summit started back, almost losing her balance, for there, lying flat on the short grass, was Alec Bevanne, his arms flung above his head, his eyes closed as if in sleep. She tiptoed softly away over moss and lichen, wondering, from the troubled look upon his face, if anything were wrong; but the breaking of a dried hemlock twig under her feet betrayed her presence, and he opened his eyes, was dazed for a moment as if unable to distinguish between the sleeping and the waking dream, then sprang to his feet, hastily brushing bits of moss and twig from coat and hair.

"It is odd that we should meet here," he said, with a poor attempt at his usual gay smile.

"I am helping Mr. Warren do an errand for his mother," she said quietly, noticing in her companion an agitation that showed

itself in nervous action of hand and of foot. At his invitation she seated herself on a great rock, and together they watched the green waves below rushing home to their island caves, rippling, receding, with white foam at the edge. Over the young man's face flushed sudden color that went as quickly, leaving pallor behind; the woman saw too late.

"I cannot help it," the words came bursting forth as if it were beyond his power to stay them; "I must speak, for I was thinking of you, — I think of nothing but you, — and then I opened my eyes, and you stood before me as if you had come in answer to my call."

She raised a warning hand, and, as she did so, noticed that his bloodshot eyes suggested sleepless nights.

"Don't!" she begged softly.

"I must!" he cried. "I love you; I know that there can be but little hope for me, but I love you. You must have seen it, and have

known, for I have betrayed it a thousand ways."

"I did not know," she said, her heart full of pity for one whose manhood seemed shaken by the force of a passion that raged within.

"I know that I may seem an insignificant person in your eyes," he went on hotly, "but I will work, I will distinguish myself, I can, if you will only help me, and then" —

She shook her head, and said only the same word, "Don't."

A little sandpiper ran near them on nimble feet, watching with bright, eager eyes, and the measure of their silence was the measure of her fearlessness as she crept toward them. Then the sandpiper ran fluttering away, and the sea gulls paused for an instant on outstretched wings as a storm of words came from the mouth of the man on the cliff. The two had risen to their feet and stood startled, defiant, as the woman's answer came: —

"Stop! What right have you to speak that way?"

Hoarse as the call of the gulls, and with their note of homelessness, the man's cry rang back: —

"I tell you I cannot live without you! I cannot, I cannot! It is the first time I have ever cared, and if there is no hope, I will throw myself from the cliff into the water!"

Was it the gulls or the waves or the woman's voice that murmured, "Coward"? Shame came into the young man's face, and quiet to his voice.

"No, do not go away," he begged. "I will do nothing, and I much regret that I have frightened you."

When Paul Warren joined them, startled by the far echo of Bevanne's voice, he found the two chattering about matters of no consequence, but the strained look in his young neighbor's face did not escape Paul Warren, nor did the aimless movements of his nervous hands. Paul glanced anxiously toward

Frances, divining the agitation of mood, but the girl had risen and was standing with her back to him, studying a sail on the horizon. With the elaborate politeness which characterized all his dealings with his neighbor, he entered into a discussion regarding the management of small craft, but his concealed indignation waxed hotter and more hot as he realized that some great shock had come to Frances Wilmot, who still stood shading her eyes with her hand and gazing out to sea.

Half an hour later, as the Sea Gull cut through the waves toward sunset and toward home, Paul Warren kept a watch on the white sail ahead that dipped and rose lightly again where Alec Bevanne's knockabout, the Rocket, danced homeward.

"That is good speed," he remarked, "but Bevanne's a reckless sailor. He crowds her as if he did not care whether he goes under or not."

Frances looked at Paul with a sigh of deep

relief. It was good to rest, after that outburst upon the island, in the strength and the impersonality of this man; and good to know, with the memory of that emotional fury in her mind, of the reserve power and self-control of which manhood was capable, — though of course Paul did not care like that, would never care at all. She shivered as the memory of Alec Bevanne's face came back to her, marveling at the difference between the children of one house, — the silent strength of love in the woman, the weakness of love in the man. And oh, the pity of it! How could music be made of this world, after all, if even the great tides sometimes went astray?

Sunset glowed behind the pine trees in the west as they neared home; it dyed the waves with a glory of color, crimson here and gold beyond; it fell on Frances Wilmot's hair and face, hiding the trouble in her eyes from the man who gazed upon it. The moment which had marred for

her the melody in things brought to him stronger and stronger sense of the encompassing rhythm of life; and more and more this woman seemed a part of it, and a part of the great sea, with its inexplicable longing, its life, its irresistible advance.

XVIII

"Try it again," suggested the friendly voice of Alec Bevanne.

"I did try," answered Uncle Peter dejectedly, "and the lawyer, as you know, would n't listen to me; said it was a bootless scheme."

"Go to somebody here; there 's Marvin over in the village."

The shadow deepened on the old man's face.

"He knows too much about it," was the answer. "Marvin was my father's lawyer and John's."

"Then he 's just the man!" cried Alec, slapping Uncle Peter's shoulder. "Face him and get the truth out of him."

There was a somewhat pathetic hilarity in Alec Bevanne's manner, and the flicker-

ing glance of his restless eye showed eager search for amusement. The two were strolling up and down a grass-grown, neglected lane back of the Bevanne house, the elder man with difficulty keeping the pace of his companion's long, nervous strides. The half-suppressed excitement of the latter's manner showed most clearly in the savage attacks of his light cane on milkweed pods, whose down he sent floating hither and yon in the still summer air.

"Go in for your rights," pursued Alec vehemently, after waiting in vain for an answer. "If John Warren took your inheritance" —

"Hush," whispered Uncle Peter, with a sudden clutch upon his companion's arm: "there 's Paul!"

Yes, there was Paul, striding through an adjacent field with Robin at his heels, a look of fine contempt upon his face. Uncle Peter wondered, with a thrill of something akin to fear, how much he had heard, but Alec

Bevanne only smiled. This unexpected encounter made matters all the more interesting at a moment when he was sorely in need of amusement, and a little surface annoyance to the son of his father's old enemy would do no harm. From all that could be found out concerning the long family quarrel, the Bevannes were greatly in arrears in the matter of paying old grudges; and already Alec half divined that in his thwarted love another injury had been added to the list.

Paul said no word, but walked on as if he had neither seen nor heard the speakers. His smiling indifference toward Alec Bevanne was broken through at last, had been broken for some time, he realized, in the hot indignation that the careless words just overheard had roused. In muscle and clenched fist lingered a sense-memory of how it had felt to knock Alec Bevanne down when they were boys, and at this moment it seemed to him as if no experience quite so satisfactory had come to him since. His teeth were set closely

together in wrath, wrath at this young man for his lack of chivalry toward a helpless old one. Gray hairs and foolishness combined should command at least pity, and Alec Bevanne was well aware that in Uncle Peter's mind, where nothing was really wrong, nothing had ever been quite right.

Half an hour later the mischievous advice of the young professor had taken effect, and by the shore path over headland and sandy beach, in the clear August weather, strode Uncle Peter, an Uncle Peter no longer smiling, chattering, debonair, but militant, a man of purpose and of action, the fixed idea in his mind not now a subject of brooding thought, but the nerve and soul of the most eventful resolve in the man's whole life. Outside help had failed. Old Andrew Lane was worse than useless in giving evidence that might lead to legitimate disputing of wills; Alec Bevanne, with all the moral encouragement he had given, was not in a position to afford practical assistance: to Uncle Peter it seemed

that the moment had come for his inner self to rise to heroic action; man nor circumstance could help him, — he would help himself.

He was taking the long path by the shore of Wahonet in order to have time to calm himself; solitude and the fresh sea breeze, he instinctively felt, would help nerve him to action. He walked with a long, slow stride, his slender frame tense with the tremulous energy of the man of dreams when summoned to unaccustomed deed. He must be firm, the shaking hand kept reminding the bamboo cane which trembled in sympathy; he must be firm.

There was cold perspiration on his brow under the protecting brim of the Panama hat when at last he walked into Wahonet, pausing by an old-fashioned brick house whose white wooden doorway bore the sign: "Abel Marvin, Attorney at Law." Uncle Peter's final summoning of all his resolution lent new wavering motions to his legs as he

mounted the stone steps and rang the door-bell. He was ushered into a room bright with red ingrain carpet, silk patchwork cushions, and chromos; and here he found a little, bent, old man, whose snow-white hair and colorless face lent added fire and expression to a pair of still brilliant dark eyes.

"Take a chair," said Abel Marvin, without rising. "Business, eh? Come to make your will?"

Uncle Peter shook his head, slowly, portentously.

"No," he answered, and, for almost the first time in his life, did not know what to say next.

"Take your time," said the old lawyer, after a pause.

"Mr. Marvin," said Uncle Peter, with a great leap of moral courage, "you did my father's business for him the better part of his life, did n't you?"

"I believe I helped transact the law busi-

ness of James Francis Warren for over thirty years," was the answer.

"And you drew up his will?"

The sharp, deep-set eyes looked out quizzically from under the shaggy white brows.

"I believe I did."

"Did it strike you at the time that there was anything curious about it?"

"I don't recall that it did," answered the old man. "I presume I was more taken up in those days with getting things done than with thinking about their being strange."

Uncle Peter was seated now in an armchair upholstered in stamped red velvet, and he leaned his chin upon his cane, which he held between his knees. Thus supported he continued his attack, with a touch of pathos in his voice.

"My father left the bulk of his property to my brother John."

"James Francis Warren certainly bequeathed the major part of his effects to John Warren," said Abel Marvin.

"Yet I was the older, and it was certainly unfair."

"Some people," drawled the old lawyer, "have an aggravating way of considering their own property their own. I s'pose that 's the way it was in this case."

"It was unjust, and you know it," said Uncle Peter, with a sudden access of fiery courage; but Abel Marvin merely shrugged his shoulders.

"There has been something strange in the whole history; I realize it more and more clearly as I grow older," sternly pursued Uncle Peter, feeling that this officer of the law was quailing before him. "Unless I am mistaken, you are the man whom I remember as being with my father in his library on one of the occasions that now come back to me as proofs of my suspicion. I refer to the time when my brother John was born."

The old lawyer started, and the eyebrows hung lower over the gleaming dark eyes.

"Well?"

"If you recall the time," said Uncle Peter, — the bamboo cane bending under the sudden demands upon it for moral support, — "can you remember whether I was the person alluded to when a remark was made about the arrangement being bad for some one?"

"I recall the circumstance perfectly, and I believe you were," answered the lawyer dryly.

"My father's will was made that day?"

"It was."

"And never changed?"

"And never changed."

The two men eyed each other across the marble-topped table for a few seconds' space.

"I feel it my duty to tell you," said Uncle Peter, clearing his throat, "that I am about to dispute that will."

The dark old eyes were all attention, but the lawyer was silent.

"I — I have resolved to make an attempt

to recover my rightful property," asserted the visitor tremulously, his pale blue eyes attempting to give back bravely the stare of the black ones.

"You 'll be a fool if you do," snapped the lawyer.

The dignity of Uncle Peter's grand manner was the only response. He waited long until his companion spoke again.

"Mr. Warren, is it your purpose to carry out this ridiculous project?"

"It is," answered Uncle Peter majestically.

"Then," said Abel Marvin, "if you will stop a minute, I will tell you something which I should have been glad to keep from you, but which it seems my duty to let you know."

"Tell on," glowered Uncle Peter.

"I regret that you have made it necessary," said the old lawyer, speaking painfully, "but I have always had a great regard for the Warren family, and am sorry to see

annoyance coming upon it. Of course you could accomplish nothing, and for your own sake, Mr. Warren, I make a last appeal: give up your foolish plan."

"I will not!" cried Uncle Peter triumphantly. "I always knew that something was wrong, that there was a secret somewhere. Now I shall find it out at last."

"There was a secret," admitted Abel Marvin, "about you. I am especially sorry to tell it to you, for you are the one person who will not be able to keep it. However, I shall tell it to no one else, and if it becomes known it will be through no fault of mine. Mr. Peter Warren, you are no more the son of James Francis Warren than I am."

"What!" stammered Uncle Peter.

"You are no Warren: you are an adopted child, taken into the family when you were four months old."

The bamboo cane had lost all strength of purpose and was quivering pitiably.

"It's a lie!" cried Uncle Peter, angrily

shaking the cane that had deserted him in his hour of need.

The lawyer shook his head, and the very accent of truth was in the motion.

"What motive could there have been for such an absurd action?" asked the other, with a scornful laugh.

"Fear of having no heir," said Abel Marvin. "Mr. James Francis Warren was an ambitious man, and his one desire was to build up a great estate and leave it to his son. He had been married eight years, and had no child when he adopted you; you were brought here with your parents from Vermont one spring when the family came back from the city, where you were supposed to have been born. So far as I know, no human being has ever suspected the secret, and Mr. Warren was fairly content to hand down his name to you, when John Warren suddenly surprised everybody by making his appearance in the world."

"It is a story that you are making up to

frighten me out of my just purpose," blustered Uncle Peter. "You have no proofs; whose son am I, according to your fairy tale?"

"You are the oldest son of Andrew Lane," said the old lawyer. "Proofs enough exist; your father has them in his possession. I naturally have none here, though I have a clear memory of all that happened on that day when Mr. Warren took me into his confidence, the day you have alluded to, when you were perhaps five years old and matters had to be readjusted because of John Warren's birth."

"Andrew Lane!" shouted Uncle Peter. "I don't believe a word of it."

Abel Marvin looked calmly out of the window.

"There's my son," he announced, "just home. If you like, he can drive us down to Andrew's, and you can see for yourself."

"Does he know?"

"Nobody knows," repeated Abel Marvin;

"John Warren always supposed you to be his brother, for James Francis wanted to carry out his original intention as nearly as possible."

The cool drive down the long country road brought to Uncle Peter only a sickening of the heart. It was a drooping figure that bent over the bamboo cane on the back seat of the light carriage, very different from the heroic one that had walked bravely along the shore an hour ago.

Old Andrew Lane was alone, sunning himself on the little front porch of the house where he lived with his son and his son's wife. Hollyhock and sunflower grew by the prim path that led to the green door of the old stone house, and the stamp of homely comfort lay on threshold and window.

"What's up?" asked Andrew, as the two old men came toward him.

"It's all up," said the lawyer. "To protect the Warren family from annoyance I've been obliged to tell Mr. Peter here a

tale that he does n't believe. You have the documents, I believe. I should like to have him see them."

With his clay pipe still in his mouth, old Andrew hobbled into an inner room, reappearing presently with a padlocked tin box, and with a worn family Bible.

"There you be," he said, putting the open Bible before Uncle Peter, and proceeding to open the box.

Uncle Peter's eyes did him bad service, but he managed to read on the stained yellow page the record of the birth of a child named Peter, on his very birthday, to Andrew and Cynthia Lane, and without a word he turned to the paper which the gardener handed him. It was a certificate of adoption of a four months' old child, called Peter Lane, by James Francis Warren, who bound himself, not only to provide for said child for life, but to support the parents, — who had moved to Wahonet, — in return for any service which they might care to give, the

support to cease at any moment if the secret were not scrupulously kept.

"Oh!" moaned Uncle Peter, convinced at last. "It is hard; it is too hard."

"So your ma thought," said old Andrew Lane, "'til Andy was born; that comforted her consid'able."

"Good-by, Mr. Warren," said the lawyer, holding out his hand. "Keep the secret if you can, and as for this afternoon's business, — well, perhaps you'd better quit reading so many paper-covered novels."

Old Andrew Lane went to put away the tin box, saying as he did so, with the slightest quiver in the gruff voice: —

"I cal'late you won't want to come to live with your folks, but if you should need to, some time, mebbe, I guess we can find room."

Uncle Peter, tottering out to the porch, utterly unable to rise to the occasion, sat down on an unpainted wooden bench, with sunflower and holyhock swimming before

his eyes, and wept piteously for great-grandmother Anne, and the ancestor-poetess, and even, in a cruel, belated sense of orphanhood, for great-great-grandfather Warren and all his sins.

XIX

The charm of the road was that it seemed to lead nowhere, only wandered incidentally whither it would, now panting up a little hill, now running down to rest in a hollow, now hiding in the woodland under nodding branch and wind-stirred leaf, now peering out to get a glimpse of the sea, — a whimsical, irresponsible, mystical road, taking its own way to the unknown. The girl who wandered lazily along it, in the beaten track or on the small, worn footpath through the grass, was keeping time in her imagination with all the free feet that had ever wandered that way. Here and there she passed a small house. At one an old man was digging in the garden; at another a little girl was playing with her doll on the doorstep; in a bit of pasture near another a calf was

frisking with joyous tail; at the next an old woman, calico-clad, was hanging clothes upon a line. Frances Wilmot wanted to stop with them all to do what they were doing, and then go on and on. None save the calf seemed to share her mood, and she pitied them that they could not follow her upon the open road.

After a quick run around a sharp curve the irresponsible road suddenly came to a crossing, and was brought face to face with the problem of choosing its way. A sign-post stood there, turned all askew, "9 m. to Brentford" staring out from a strip of board where a finger pointed heavenward; "4 m. to Valley Cove," on a strip pointing to earth; and "6 m. to Ransom's Point," on a strip that pointed straight to a mossy stone fence. The road seemed to evade any choice, and the three ways that led onward fled in different directions from the one by which she had come; and sunlight lay on them all, grass grew green at the edge, aster and

goldenrod blossomed impartially by the crumbling stone fences. What need to choose? She started along the road at the left; each led somewhere, and the guiding sea was close at hand.

The road led merrily off past meadowland and into a green forest, and suddenly joined company with a brook, hurrying as if glad of new music, and as if bent on seeing whether dust and clod could not keep pace with running water. Guarded by rock and stone, and overhung by sunlit leaves, the stream glided on, falling here in little silvery cascades, and gathering there into a quiet pool. The air, soft with the coolness of living branches on which the sun is beating, was still with the murmuring quiet of the woods. As the girl followed, stepping with the brook, she thought only of the touch of autumn in the new, sweet freshness of the air on face and wrist and throat; then, emerging from the woodland, she realized that her landmarks were gone, the village

spire that had often guided her steps was no longer in sight, and the bold outline of the Emerson Inn on its headland had disappeared. What matter, while along this unknown way vine and blossom lured her feet to wander farther, and her hands to gather spoils?

It was the time of the glory of goldenrod: tall, starry clusters nodded over the stone fences; sword-shaped stalks burned with their rich color along the highway; and short, sunburned heads turned the pasture lands to fields of gold, dim and beautiful as the dream fields of the Islands of the Blest. The girl filled her arms with it; long clusters nodded over her shoulders, and a great mass glowed against the white of her gown, and against her sunburned cheek. So great a burden was she carrying that she grew weary, and, wondering where she could stop to rest, she found herself by a little old deserted house, whose worn doorstep invited her to pause. By the open door grew old

rose bushes where in June ragged pink roses still blossomed upon ragged stems; through the casements, from which the windows had disappeared, curled and twined woodbine and clematis. Some woman who had lived here long ago had loved sweet things at her window, and had set flowers to bloom by the paths which her feet must pass. Grass covered the little garden plot, and old lilac bushes grew apace by the broken picket fence and the posts of the vanished gate. Empty and open to sun and rain were the bare rooms where woodwork and floors were mouldering. Swallows had builded upon the cornices of the doors, and on the mantel in the old parlor a wren had made her nest.

> Life and thought have gone away
> Side by side,
> Leaving doors and windows wide, —
> Careless tenants they.

Sitting on the step with her head leaning against the white doorpost, Frances Wilmot half slept, while the warm sunshine of late

afternoon shone on her face; and she almost heard, through the murmur of live things from the long grass near by, the tread of the vanished feet of father, mother, and child that had worn the threshold thin. Close by a cricket chirped; yellow butterflies, glad of the goldenrod in her lap, fluttered about her, lighting on hair and eyelids of the girl who sat so still; and home-coming swallows circled anxiously near and far again, troubled by this motionless disturber of their domain.

Here Paul Warren found her as he was sauntering home after a ten-mile walk, and he stopped, frowning; was she safe in this lonely spot? As he looked, however, he forgot to frown, — so fair a picture she made leaning there with her long lashes dark upon her cheek, in her bower of palest yellow and deep Etruscan gold; there was no doubt any longer of Paul Warren's sense of the beauty of color. So soft were his footsteps in the rank grass outside the ruined picket fence that she did not hear him, and he stood long

watching her. Presently she opened her eyes and smiled.

"I was n't asleep," she said sleepily.

"May I come in?" he asked, from the lilac bush by the gatepost.

"I don't know what place could be fitter for a ghost than a ruined house," said the girl merrily. "Come in and flit with the other shades; I 've heard them whispering about me."

"It seems to me," he remarked, as he came slowly up the grass-grown walk, "that you rather resemble some of the angels of the early Italian painters, with their shaded golden wings."

She looked reproachfully at him.

"The one thing that I have liked about you," she said severely, "has been that you were different from other men, and did not pay foolish compliments."

"I was not complimenting you; perhaps I was complimenting the angels, for there is something in your face that is not in

theirs," he said, looking gravely down at her. She rose, shaking her head.

"You forget that they all had golden hair; only witches and lady demons had black locks like mine. Do you dare go in?"

He pushed the sagging green door farther open, and they entered the old hall, with footsteps muffled by the dust which lay thick upon the floor. In the kitchen a tin mug lay upon a broken stool; in the parlor a chromo of "Hope," white-robed and staring wildly, hung upon the wall, and a child's top lay upon the floor. Vines were already growing with fresh green tendrils over the crumbling boards, and in one place, where the floor was broken, a great thistle had thrust its way up and had burst into purple bloom.

"Now," said Paul Warren softly, "you look like the spirit of Life itself, going with golden torches through the house of death."

Frances Wilmot turned and faced him with light words that belied the shadowy depths of her eyes.

"Mr. Warren, if you are n't careful, you will turn into a poet, and that would be a most undeserved fate for a philosopher!"

The man's face quivered in the moted sunbeams that stole in through the open windows toward the west.

"I have turned into a lover," he said slowly; "that is, perhaps, the same thing."

For an instant all that moved in the room was the dust which the sunlight turned to a golden cloud as it rose; it could not hide the doubt and question and wonder in the girl's eyes.

"Yes, of course I mean you," said Paul Warren. "Who else is there — in all the world?"

The tense, white lips and tightly clenched hands betrayed how great had been his pain in speaking as he had spoken.

"You knew that I loved you; you must have known," he said.

"I never dreamed it," said the girl, with a little gasp. "*You?*"

"Why not I?" he asked sternly. "You have thought of me as an abstraction; it is odd that I should be compelled to tell you that I am a man! I'm a thing of brawn and muscle and of a beating heart, which I think is capable of taking hold as far down as the heart can take on human joy and human pain. Your jest of the ghost has been a merry one, but it is over now."

The girl's head was bent in awe among her flowers.

"I'm sorry," she murmured. "I should not have been so saucy if I had known."

Her wit and her eloquence had deserted her; she was as the most speechless and embarrassed maiden who ever stood dumb in Love's presence.

"Perhaps there are different kinds of gray webs to wear across the eyes," he said, smiling.

"You — you never betrayed it, by the quiver of a muscle," she stammered. "I should have known."

"You know the ordinary signs very well, I presume," he answered. "I never meant to show it, or to let you know."

"Why?" she asked. The dusky eyes she raised to him were hard for the man to read. Outside the cricket chirped loudly across the silence; a swallow, entering through the open window, took fright at the two motionless figures standing there, and skimmed away.

"What would you think," he asked, breathing with difficulty, "of the task set for a man who was in a wilderness from which he could not escape, and who heard a voice calling, a voice that knew the way of his soul, and still had to turn and go away from it?"

The girl looked on in wonder, watching through the dust-flecked sunshine, and he reached both hands out toward her, then drew them back.

"How can I let the shadows of my life fall on your face?" he asked passionately.

"The shadows of your life!" she said

with reproach. "There are n't any. You make them up to please your Puritan ancestors."

"Then — will you come?"

She stepped lightly across the dusty floor to the doorway, looking back from the threshold to the man who sadly followed.

"This means that you will not help me build again the ruined house of life?"

"I am afraid," said Frances Wilmot.

"You who believe so deeply in life, and whose courage has so often put me to shame?"

"Life, yes," she answered, "but Love, — that is too great for me, too terrible, and — I am afraid."

"Ah," he cried, "it is the first thing in life that has made me unafraid."

"You are a man," said the girl simply. "It shows the fundamental strength of you from Adam's time on; I am only a woman."

"Thank Heaven!" he said.

"I can prattle about life, but then I faint

and fail when the supreme test comes. I cannot let it come!" and she put out her hands to ward off Love. "I am content with the beauty of the world, and the happiness that lies behind, and the sorrow whose meaning I have n't half spelled out."

"Child," said Paul Warren, watching the hands from which the blossoms dropped in a golden shower on the worn doorstep and the green grass, "don't you see that you are half confessing that you care?"

"I have n't confessed it to myself," she answered with brave lips.

"Sit down for a minute; you are tired," he commanded, and she did his bidding.

"You must come, Enchantress," he said, from the step at her feet. "There are so many doors for you to open, and none other has the key. You must come to unwind for me the gray webs of many lives."

"That was just nonsense," she murmured. "You remember it?"

"I remember every word that you have

spoken, every look that I have seen upon your face. Take me through one of your open doors, and we will go by wood and stream and mountain till we find your tree of life, and will nibble its leaves together."

"I did n't mean anything," said the girl. "I was just teasing you because you studied so much."

Before them the sun was going down in deep August light behind a row of dull green cedars that let the glory through; from a distant wood thrushes sang, and the dampness of oncoming night crept to them over the grass. The woman's voice was broken when she spoke.

"Are you sure that it is I?"

"I am sure," he made answer, "that you are the bit of my heart that was lost when it was broken, ages before I was born; now that I have found you again, it will be whole once more."

"I cannot," she said, whispering, "I cannot."

When he saw the suffering in her face, as the rich nature faced the challenge to keener joy and keener pain, he spared her. Stooping, he gathered from the grass the flowers that had fallen there, then side by side they walked home in the fragrant dusk, with the clustered flowers shining out as a light upon their way. Silence enfolded them, save for the sweet notes of nesting birds, the murmur of the wind-stirred leaves, and the ripple of a tiny brook over its rocky wayside bed. Before them in the west the slender crescent of the new moon hung in the quivering sunset light of the sky.

"Like a world of gold to walk into," said the man, for his soul was glad within him. It was true that this woman had said him nay, but in his heart of hearts he knew better.

XX

"One of them," observed Frances Wilmot to the sea, "is like a sudden squall when the water is all furious, and driven this way and that; the other — the other is like your deepest deep, where dim, rich things lie hidden at the heart of the tides. The squall blows over and the water forgets, but the tide must go endlessly on its appointed way."

The sea answered with all its myriad beauty of motion and color and sound. Across the brown rocks, purple-tinted where they gleamed with wet, a great green wave rolled in with exquisite curving, and the girl watched vainly for the moment when the blue of the deep water melted into the green of the wave, and for that when all shifted into pale foam. Leaning back against the rock, her hands clasped behind her head,

and the wind from the sea blowing back her hair and her fluttering sleeves, she spoke aloud, exultantly, forgetting her decision of yesterday.

"No one but me knows the treasure hidden at the heart of him, and it is mine, all mine."

Delicate, clear morning rested over the sea, and the rising tide brought Frances Wilmot, to whom the everlasting rhythm had grown to mean always a feeling of gain or of loss, strong sense of incoming life. Pale and far, a fairy dream of blue, the water stretched, with myriad sparkles of light, light, light, breaking the surface a thousand ways, moving hither and yon, and gleaming as if invisible mermaids in countless numbers were waving torches of flame. The freshness of those moments when earth was young was on land and sea, in the early look of blue water and the hints of silver mist not yet cleared from the face of the deep; and its voice was as the first murmur

out of primeval quiet. Far away, dim with distance, two fishing boats were daintily riding the waves. Watching them, the girl leaned forward, and her eyes were wet.

"Tell me if I love him," she begged of her comrade sea.

The great waves answered her in deep murmur on the rocks, and in faintest ripples over pebble and sand.

"I did not want to," she whispered, with the sob of the tide in her voice. "I was content, for I had you and all the other beauty, and my old happiness, and my old pain. It was all good, and I saw my way."

From the heart of the sea to the heart of the woman came a cry, deep calling unto deep.

"I am afraid," she said brokenly, and the ocean, with moving finger, wrote its infinite meanings on rock and on sand.

Frances Wilmot rose and walked along the lonely shore, over pebbly beach and grass-grown headland, and golden butter-

flies followed as in pursuit. The touch of autumn was over all the land, and the gray cliffs jutting into the water were aster-covered and crowned with yellowing grass. At her feet the tangled blackberry vines were touched with red, and all the hinted purple and crimson and gold seemed to her full of the great encompassing rhythm of things. Wandering the way of the sea, she sang to herself, her song of the fullness of life flowing out in melody that only now and then found words. The lilt of her voice caught the sound of the breaking wave, and its low notes chimed with the withdrawing ripple. Little trills as of human laughter broke and splashed with the foaming spray as the singer went on, voice and feet and body keeping the rhythm of the ocean. Tiny sandpipers fluttered away from her in charmed fear, and above, sea gulls listened on outstretched wings. Suddenly, with full melody of sound, her voice echoed a great sense of joy that came to her, smiting like a pang, as soul and

sense thrilled with unbearable keenness of sudden life.

"Ah, it hurts!" she said, hiding in her hands, even from the sea, her face, which glowed with the flush of love and the fear of love.

She had strolled, with the song on her lips, far out on a rocky headland, when, looking up, she saw, not far away, Alice Bevanne leaning back against a wall of rock, her hands clasped loosely before her. Her clothing of brownish gray was so near in color to that of the rocks that the singer had come very close without observing her, and the song broke off abruptly as the Southern girl stood and watched. Something in the slender strength of the figure with the finely cut face made it seem akin to this delicate shore, where white beach and grass-grown cliff showed singular austerity in their beauty of outline and of coloring. Detached, apart, the girl wore an inscrutable expression, caught from the ancient rocks.

"Why did n't you tell me that you were here?" asked Frances Wilmot reproachfully. "You must have heard long ago the great noise I was making."

Alice Bevanne looked up with her eyes alight as with sudden sunshine on deep sea.

"I was afraid that you would stop," she said simply, "and you did, just before you got to the final note, the note that I wanted to hear."

They talked for a time carelessly on the rocks, in the rich summer sunshine already touched with autumn's gold, trying to weave veils of commonplace before the recesses of their hearts, which the accident of meeting had half revealed.

"It is almost time for me to go away," said the Southern girl, pointing to clustered purple asters over their heads, and to the least golden-rod that grew in a cleft of the rocks at their feet by the sea.

"You will never go away," said Alice

Bevanne, with a little husky quiver in her voice. "That which you are and do can never go."

"Is it very lonely here in the winter?" asked Frances.

The girl looked at her as if startled by the thought that any state save loneliness could be possible, and Frances Wilmot, alight with love and fire, with the great joy of the world kindled in pulse and in finger, gazed at her friend with a new sense of her imperishable strength. It seemed as if to her had been granted, in saving grace of sacrifice and of renunciation, a deeper hold on life in letting go than she herself had found in the fulfillment of the heart's desire. Her voice quivered as she laid her hand on Alice Bevanne's, and spoke softly: —

"The note that you were waiting for is too high for me; I think that no one but you could sing it."

XXI

ABEL MARVIN had been right in his estimate of the probable action of Uncle Peter when intrusted with his own secret, — for the first time in its whole existence it was unsafe. The old man confided it first to Frances Wilmot, with a genuine appeal for sympathy, which was swift and real after a startled outbreak of surprise. It was not hard for the girl to divine the depth of his misery, for he looked suddenly old and wilted and gray. His gay pride in the achievements and the shortcomings of his ancestors broken, there was nothing left for his support. Above their china, above their silver, above their mahogany, he had plumed himself upon their sins; stuff of his heart and soul were all their deeds of good and of ill, and the corroding rust of contented re-

pose in ancestral experiences had eaten out all possibilities of action on his own part. Now all was gone, and for the first time he was alone with his own life, and helpless.

Mrs. Warren was his next confidante; Miss Wilmot was at the house only now and then, and Uncle Peter wanted somebody who knew near him all the time. To the woman who had borne his whims and listened courteously for many years to his endless talking, the shock was great, and the sudden loneliness of the old man tugged at her heartstrings. He had been too long identified with her troubles — the cause of many of them — for her to give him up lightly, and tears shone on her lashes as he told his tale. He found the sympathy of these two women most sweet; after all, there were consoling elements in the situation, — romance and mystery, of which he was the hero. It was part of a strange tale which he could perhaps write out some day.

Toward Paul his action was different. He

walked into the library one morning, where his nephew was sitting, gnawing the end of a penholder, lost in happy dreams, and told him the whole story, not only of the revelation in regard to his birth, but also of his project for disputing the will. Sitting in John Warren's great leather chair, he spoke with the simple dignity of real shame.

"I could n't go on concealing what I had done, Paul," he said. "Your father would have despised such action, for I never really believed that I was in the right. You, too, would despise it, and you must know."

Paul, astounded, incredulous, and deeply touched, realized that never in his life had he respected the old man so much as he did in this confession, which showed the influence of the Warren habit of suffering remorse disproportionate to misdeed. Then a gleam of amusement shot across the moisture in his eyes as the new Uncle Peter disappeared and the old one came back, whispering: —

"In a way I did not do it, Paul; I only

saw it done, and could not stop it. It was as if I were but the instrument of some all-compelling force. Many would call it an offense; I call it a phenomenon, for you cannot get back of scientific law. It was not I who sinned, it was nature who sinned against me; the great ancestral host moved hand and brain."

Here Uncle Peter's voice broke as he suddenly realized that this great ancestral host was no longer his, and that he could not explain himself ever again in terms of great-great-grandfather Warren. To Paul's kindly suggestion that one line of forbears would perhaps fit as well as another that explanation of one's shortcomings, he responded only with gloomy silence; then, thrown upon himself by virtue of his late misdeed and his confession, he took a new stand of moral firmness.

"I shall go away, Paul, for I have no right here, especially in the light of what I have done."

The young man reached across the table and shook Uncle Peter's dejected hand.

"You will do nothing of the kind with my consent. A man belongs where he has lived his life, and my father would never forgive me if harm came to you."

"But my — my plot," whispered Uncle Peter.

"Nonsense!" said Paul. "It did not amount to anything, and I have always felt, as you have, that the distribution was wrong."

"It was strange, was n't it?" said the old man appreciatively.

"It was!" Paul assented heartily.

"Young Mr. Bevanne felt it, too," confided Uncle Peter. "His sympathy in all this trial has meant much to me. I wish you knew him better."

Paul growled something under his breath.

"He is extremely sensitive to other people's troubles, and I could hardly have come through this without his delicate under-

standing and his advice. Oh, he has done nothing reprehensible," for his nephew's eyes suddenly blazed. "He merely thought that there was a wrong there to right, and has given what help he could."

Paul's mother, meeting him in the hall as he went from the interview with Uncle Peter, wondered at the anger in his face.

"He has told you!" she exclaimed, touching her son's sleeve with gentle fingers. "Don't be hard on him, Paul. Your father always made allowances for Peter, and he has not been deceiving us; he never knew."

"I wonder what kind of a brute you think me, mother!" said Paul, with a sudden smile. "Can't you realize that there are certain things that a son of yours would never even feel tempted to do?"

As the days went on Paul Warren treated the old man even more kindly than of old; the irony of the situation was punishment enough, he said to himself, and Nemesis had been almost too swift. To his own amuse-

ment, a feeling of freedom and relief took possession of him, for the dark incubus of his boyhood's days departed, and the host of phantom ancestors conjured up by Uncle Peter fled into gray distance as their leader, with all his theories, stood routed by one simple fact. It was strange, Paul mused, that that which had been so solemn a thing to his earlier years should go with such sense of rippling merriment, but the world seemed all echoing with laughter to Paul Warren in these days, for joy had descended upon him at last, blotting out past and future. To waken every morning to a sense of the incredible beauty of his lot; to fall asleep every night with the feeling that happiness too great to grasp was his, was an experience that lay outside all that he had previously known of life. As he walked up and down the great stairway, past the old clock that had ticked away his forefathers' lives, and the great portraits that had been the terror of his childhood, he stopped sometimes to ask, "Is it

I?" Moments came when the intolerable joy was keenest hurt, so finely was his spirit strung. His occasional realization that a woman had refused his offered love could not break his mood; perhaps he dreamed that her spoken no was a waiting yes; perhaps was content with the feeling that, whether she was to be his or no, the joy of life was his with its thrill, its sting, its pain.

He found her one day in the garden, seated on a green bench near the spot where he had seen her first. Sunlight lay on her dark hair and her white gown, as she told a tale to the least Andrew Lane, who was sitting open-mouthed upon the grass near her, by a gray kitten that lay asleep in the sun, its head upon its warm paws. She had played much with the child during the summer, and had taught him all her lore.

"I like stories," said Andy suggestively.

"What kind of stories?"

"Fairy stories are best, but I should like one I have never heard."

"And what about?"

"I think," said the little man, after reflection, "about my kitty."

"Your kitty asleep or awake?" asked Frances Wilmot gravely.

A smile of deep interest rippled across the child's face.

"He is asleep now; I think I should like it about my kitty asleep."

The Southern girl leaned back, thinking, and then the story began.

"This is called 'The Kitten's Dream.'"

"Who wrote it?" demanded Andy.

"Nobody wrote it; I just felt it, and I am going to tell it to you. The kitten dreamed that he was running; did n't you see his paws twitch just now?"

"No, but they do sometimes," admitted the child. "I know that he likes to run better than anything else."

"The kitten dreamed that he gave a little leap one day and sprang into a world where everything danced and moved all the time,

so that there was something to chase forever and ever, to the end of the dream, to the end of the world. There were little silvery mice that ran and ran, with their long tails dangling behind them; and there were green grasshoppers that hopped and hopped; and beautiful toads of green and brown that jumped and jumped, but always sideways. There were fluttering butterflies of many colors that flew this way and that on wings that were yellow or blue or green with wonderful markings, and he chased them all and never caught any, and he was glad."

"My kitty catches grasshoppers sometimes," ventured Andy.

"Does n't he look sorry?" demanded the story-teller.

"Maybe," said the boy, thinking hard. "I never thought of that."

"In this country of the kitten's dream, when the apples fell from the trees they rolled and rolled and never stopped; there were green ones, and golden ones, and deep,

deep red ones, and they flashed away through the grass. The only thing that troubled the kitten was that he could not chase them all at the same time.

"The only flowers that grew here were flowers that moved and nodded —"

"I 've seen them!" interrupted the child, visibly excited, — "daisies and buttercups and wild honeysuckle."

The story-teller assented.

"There were others, too, for all flowers move and dance if you only watch. Here the little green leaves twinkled and moved all the time, for the swiftest breeze chased and chased everything there, flower and leaf, butterfly and grasshopper, to the end of the world, where some buttercups nodded over the very edge; and in chasing the breeze the kitten chased everything at once. Most gladly of all the little wind ran after the tall grass that grew in the meadow, and made it move in great waves like the waves of the sea."

"That's where I've seen the daisies," said Andy, nodding eagerly. "Tell me about some more things that went."

"I must not forget the brooks: there were little brooks that leaped and hopped, all full of golden sparkles, and it was as much as ever the kitten could do to keep up with one. In the brooks were fish with beautiful scales of many colors, silver and rose and purple all shading into one another, and the kitten played tag with the fish."

"But did n't he get wet? He just hates water."

"The dream that the kitten had oftenest," said Frances Wilmot gravely, "was that the water did not make him wet. He could get into it with all four paws and tail to follow the fish, but he never caught them, and he never caught the brook, for it ran away from him, and he never caught the lovely golden-brown lights and shadows in the bed of the stream where the pebbles were, for whenever he put his foot on them they were gone."

"Was it always summer?" asked the boy. "It is n't here."

"No, sometimes it was winter, and there were great white snowflakes falling here and there, to follow and to follow. On cold nights there were warm fires in the great fireplace, and beautiful flames curled and danced and fluttered, only they made him sad, for they were bad for kitten paws. He knew, for once he had chased a little flame and had caught it, poor kitten! He liked better the little golden sunbeams moving on old gray stone walls in summer, and he ran after these by the hour, with leaf shadows moving in them, but he never caught any.

"But these are only things on earth. Often he dreamed of following through the sky great birds with blue wings, and birds with green wings, and birds with long white tails that fluttered just ahead. There were little mists and clouds, too, floating, floating away, and he often dreamed of running — how he never knew — through the air,

and chasing now a rosy cloud and now a white one with purple shadows, but if he ever got his paw on one it parted and floated on in a hundred little shapes of cloud, rose-colored or white, leaving the kitten distracted way up in the blue sky."

"Did n't he ever catch anything at all?" asked a grieved voice.

Frances Wilmot bent and stroked the child's tawny hair.

"The kitten was a very wise one, and it always dreamed of running and running after things, and never catching them."

The kitten woke and stretched itself in the sun, then lazily rose and began to chase a bit of thistledown that floated past on the warm air.

"See!" said Frances Wilmot triumphantly.

Andy looked after the kitten with new interest, then followed it as fast as bare feet could go. It was then that Paul Warren came out from the cool shadow of the cedar

trees and looked down at the face whose humorous sadness told how near to her deeper thought the whimsical tale had gone.

"What wicked philosophy are you teaching that child?" he asked.

"It is truth," she said gravely. "It is only the escape of beauty that is beautiful, the feeling it come and go."

"And of love?"

"Perhaps it is the same with love," she answered, whispering, with her eyes closed under the sun. "It is so great; it comes, wave after wave, like the sea, like a great sea that has no shore; perhaps it goes the same way, — who can tell?"

"Then you have felt it coming?" he asked in a voice that trembled.

"I think," she answered, "that I have felt the ripples about my feet."

He bent and kissed her where the dark hair met the brow, and her eyes, as they slowly opened, saw a sudden dimness in his. She smiled wistfully up at him.

"Only, if we try to bid this moment stay, we may never again find one so exquisite; perhaps it would be better to let it go, and to be forever pursuing and free."

He took her hands and held them fast within his own; then, as a full realization of his joy swept over him, he bowed his head upon them, crying out: —

"I am unworthy, unworthy, but I love you. You are not afraid to come?"

"Yes," she made answer, "I am afraid, but I will come."

XXII

The beauty of autumn deepened over sea and land as the September days went swiftly by. Clearer, crisper blue lay on the water, while all things growing by field and shore, the bulrushes in the swamp land, the grass on the upland slopes, aster, golden-rod, and fern blended into one dim harmony. Thistle-down and milkweed bloom floated noiselessly past the girl who wandered by shore and by inland paths, feeling in all the throbbing, passing color the very pulse of nature's life beating on her own.

Through these long days of dream, when earth dreamed with her, her eyes were dim with happiness, broken only by the fear that joy had woven about her too potent a spell, and that nothing could break it henceforward, not the call of human suffering nor the

old quick sense of human need. Then the mood passed; her own heart and the wide horizon line bore witness to the larger life that was rippling within her own.

She was much alone in these days, except when Paul Warren or his mother was with her, for she shunned the Bevanne household, fearing to meet Alec Bevanne. The scene on the rocks at Tern Island was too vivid and too terrible for her to wish a repetition, and the young man's face, wrought out of its old semblance by overmastering passion, haunted her dreams. The few occasions on which she had seen him since that day brought her no relief; to be sure, the flame had died out of his face, but the darkened eyes and sullen mouth filled her with remorse for the wrong she had unwittingly done him.

She grieved that she must meet Alice Bevanne less and less, and grieved the more because she saw the record of fresh trouble written in the girl's eyes. Longing to ques-

tion her, but not daring, she stood aloof, fancying at times that Alice was aware of her brother's story; at these moments her friend's expression became to her but the visible picture of the anxiety in her own mind. Again she realized that this could be to the New England girl but one strand in the dark web which fate had woven about her, and remorse changed back to pity.

They were walking side by side along the quiet shore one evening, for Alice had come in the old fashion to the Inn, and were watching the faint, last flush of day fade into twilight over dim water and dusky shore. The moon, which had hung like a pale shield against the blue, gleamed round and golden as they paced the sand, and in the broad pathway of light a spectral ship with all sails set moved down the water as if going from one land of faery to another. Suddenly the mystical charm of the moment was broken, and Frances Wilmot felt her friend's hand quiver on her arm. Following

the glance of her straining eyes, she saw, ahead, on the rocks which lay bare in the moonlight, a swift shadow moving close, too close, to the water; a man's white hat gleamed out by the edge of the cliff, then disappeared. Alice Bevanne broke from her side, ran, fleet of foot, to the rocks, climbed hastily up, and the sound of voices came back to the Southern girl, who stood alone on the white sand, her heart throbbing with a nameless fear. Presently Alice came back, and was silent as before.

"What is it?" demanded Frances Wilmot.

"Nothing," answered the girl hastily. "I was afraid for a minute, but it is all right."

"I will not be put off in this way," said Frances.

"It is only Alec," said the other reluctantly, averting her face. "He has not seemed like himself lately, — something has troubled him; we are afraid of melancholia, and I am watching him a little."

"What caused it?" asked Frances, a quiver in her voice.

"Nothing that could be helped," answered Alice quietly; then she turned her face, and her friend saw that she knew.

"Ah!" cried Frances piteously, "you have so much to vex you! Why should I be sent to make life harder in so many ways!"

"Hush!" said Alice, laying a finger on her friend's lips. "You have done nothing, *nothing*, do you understand, that has been your fault. To me you have been sheer blessing."

Later, from a clump of birches near the top of the cliff, Frances watched brother and sister going home together along the grass-grown road across the moorland; and standing alone, while the little leaves fluttering in the night-wind on forehead and cheek and the soft chirp of crickets mingling with the murmur of water brought her an almost unbearable sense of fullness

of life, she marveled at the growth of a soul where all that makes existence sweet had been denied. Achievement was already written on this girl's face, in delicate pencilings, and soft shadows at temple and eye. It was one that could never show faded beauty, immortal meanings being written there.

That night Alice Bevanne stood long by her open window, with the cool night air on her lifted face, looking out into the shadowed night. Of what she was thinking none could tell: not the crickets chirping outside, nor the golden moon across the water, nor the scraggly locust trees that had guarded and shadowed her life. Then, going over to her mirror to unfasten the old-fashioned gold pin at the throat of her white woolen gown, she suddenly bent and blew out the candles in the branching candelabra, as if her reflection had startled her with an expression of sharing her confidence, for Alice Bevanne was reticent even in the presence of her

mirror, and faced her own image with an expression which said, "Hitherto shalt thou come and no farther." Far, far away, as she lay sleeping on her pillow that night, seemed the beating of the tide; far, far away the ebb and flow of human life, so poignantly her own without any share.

As September lingered by the shore, the air was full of the breathlessness of coming change; then, out of the silence across the sea, came a great autumn storm. It began with a day of darkened sky and of ominous stillness; the slow waves on the purple-tinged rocks seemed thrilling with some deep sense of stir at the depths of things. Frances Wilmot was vaguely troubled; listening on the rocks with strained ears she murmured her song of the tide, and into it crept a soft moan, drawn from the inner heart of pain. This sea was strange to her who had known and loved it in so many phases, — its stillest, most silvery look, its endlessly paling and deepening blue, and its

swift, brief summer storms. Could this be her ocean, at whose edge she had so often waited in the soft ripple of darkness and of water, sometimes helping pile driftwood high, to watch the leaping golden flame of fire by the white flame of the waves? Now, under the low, dull purple clouds, came a sullen, lashing wind, bringing gusts of blinding rain. All things far were blotted from sight; from the window could be seen only blackened sky and darkened sea, against which gleamed streaks of livid foam. The dismal booming of the waves on the rocks sounded through day and night, and a great wind rushed from the water, shaking the Inn to its foundations, crashing in the branches of trees, and carrying the moan of the sea to the very heart of the forest.

Three days and nights the fury of the gale lasted, and one by one the ladies of the Emerson Inn deserted, while the schoolmistress maid, with heart beating fast in expectation, disappeared, joining the ranks of those

who seek glory beyond the far horizon. Mistress Somebody from Somewhere was the first of the guests to depart; the house was going to rock, she observed, like a vessel in a tornado, and she had had enough experience of that kind. It was when the storm was at its height that the Lady from Cincinnati went, resolute, disregarding driving wind and pelting rain. She was not afraid of crashing branches, nor did she think wind or rain would hurt the horses, and she had two lectures to make ready at once for a woman's club. Waterproof-clad, with a thick veil tied under her chin, she looked through the dripping windows to see that her trunks were well covered in the express wagon, then bent and kissed Frances Wilmot's brow.

"We have all gained a great deal from one another this summer, have n't we?" she said, holding the girl's hand. Then she went out into the wet world, and disappeared behind the lashing branches of the pines on

the hill, down the streaming road, and passed from sight — forever. But the little Lady from Boston stayed on, glorying in the storm, as the rain ceased, and still the clouds hung low, and a great wind blew and blew.

Higher and higher rose the sea. Dark and incredibly great came the strong racers of ocean, their high crests breaking in green curves, the green foaming into white. To Frances Wilmot, in her wonder and awe, it seemed as if lines of mountain had suddenly broken into quick movement, and were coming on in an awful march of terror and of beauty, of roar and thunder, of color and shadow and foam.

XXIII

It was Uncle Peter who carried to Alec Bevanne the news concerning the happiness that had come upon the Warren household, —a chastened, quiet Uncle Peter, whose manner had lost something of its airy assurance. He had come out in driving wind today, though ordinarily the savage aspects of nature appealed to him but slightly, to watch the great waves rolling in under a darkened sky. The storm which had vanished from the upper air seemed to have betaken itself to the very heart of the sea, and to be raging there, secret, unappeasable. The mountain waves of yesterday were gone, yet more awful was the mighty stirring of the depths.

On the spray-dashed rocks he found Alec Bevanne, standing idly with his hands in his pockets and his felt hat pulled low over his

eyes, dejected as if partaking of the mood of moaning wind and sullen sea. He hardly glanced at Uncle Peter, but stood apart, and the look in his blue eyes was that of one so withdrawn in his inner trouble that the beating waves of human life could not break entrance there. It grieved Uncle Peter, who could not bear the sight of suffering, nor a cold look from one who had been his friend; and, drawing near, he held out his withered old hand in greeting. The other shook it mechanically, with a look that suggested blank unconsciousness that any one was there rather than active desire that he should go away. With a wish to comfort and to cheer, Uncle Peter, mysteriously touching the lapel of the young man's coat, said in a half whisper: —

"You look as if a bit of good news would do you good. In confidence I can tell you that our charming Miss Wilmot has consented to become one of our — of the Warren family, in fact, to become Paul's wife."

Genuine gladness sounded in Uncle Peter's voice: romance in any form he loved, — it need not be his own. In this mood of exhilaration he entirely forgot the passion of his young neighbor for Miss Wilmot, forgot until he saw his face, and then was frightened by the pallor that crept over cheek and forehead, and by the tightening of the lips and the cords of the neck. It was too late to do anything to repair his mistake, and Uncle Peter wisely resolved to go. He did so, tripping hastily over wet rock and slippery stone, for he felt that he was old and no longer strong of arm, and he had seen the sudden clenching of Alec Bevanne's fists, with full realization that he had before him a man beside himself with rage.

"There have been two cases of insanity in that family," said Uncle Peter breathlessly to himself, as he gained a safe place of wet grass in the cove.

Alec Bevanne was left alone upon the rocks, and, restless as the restless sea, he

strolled along the shore with movements which suggested that the wind had its way with him and bent him to its will. Beyond the Emerson Inn he suddenly found Frances Wilmot at the edge of the little cove where his father's old dory was pulled high upon the sand. The girl was standing with wind-tossed hair driven back from her forehead, and her golf cape blown from her shoulders with a motion that resembled the flutter of wings. Joy of the passion of the sea was strong upon her, as was shown by the look of her face when the spray touched it, and by the eyes that watched the inky purple of the far water, the great green curling waves, and the gray gulls far and near. She stood, braced with tense muscles against the wind, unconscious of him, unconscious of everything save the stormy beauty and the thunder of ocean.

As he saw her, he stopped for a moment and stood rigid, with his hands clenched tightly at his sides. Then a quiver went

through him, and he shook with something that was not the might of the wind; an evil look came to the bright blue eyes as he went to her down the shore path where fern and goldenrod lay beaten low by the past fury of the storm. When he spoke to her, it was with a voice that trembled through his effort to appear entirely self-controlled.

"Miss Wilmot," he said eagerly, "I am going to ask a very great service of you."

She turned to him, smiling through the spray.

"Yes?"

The rush of the wind and the roar of the breakers almost drowned his voice, and he came close to her before he spoke again.

"My sister Alice," he said quickly, and as he spoke she no longer wondered at his uncontrollable agitation, "is out yonder on the point beyond Storm Cove. She went out early this afternoon, mistaking the tide; it must have surprised her there and cut

her off from the mainland. There is but one way to save her, and there is no one else near. Will you help? I think that the Rocket will weather the waves; I'm a fairly good sailor, you know, and there is no such sea on as there was yesterday."

She marveled at the length and the carefulness of his explanation, and answered before his last word was said.

"Alice in danger? Of course I will come! Quick! Push out the dory, and I will help!"

She looked at the raging water and the long, white streaks of foam, knowing no fear in the excitement of the moment and the sudden call of need. The man's hands grasped the boat, and, with strength that was not all of muscle, dragged it to the water, then, when he had bade her leap in, pulled out into the waves with vehement will. Admiration for his courage and his skill stung her with sudden penitence as she realized that she had misjudged in the past the man

whose love for his sister could nerve him to deeds so great.

"Could n't we go on in the dory?" she asked, as they drew near the Rocket, which was tugging at her buoy as she rode the waves, now on the crest, now plunging into the trough.

"No, no!" he shouted back. "There, I have her. Jump!"

Obedient to his bidding, yet now half afraid, she sprang into the boat and crawled to the helm; the man leaped after her, and, with a shout that had a ring of exultation in it, ran up the sail, tugging at the wet halyards with fingers that trembled in strong excitement; then slipped his mooring, and they were away.

"So much sail in this sea?" asked Frances Wilmot; courage like this man's was a splendid thing, she said nervously to herself.

"She 'll carry it!" he cried back. "Fine, is n't it?"

The Rocket leaped and plunged, and rose

again, lay almost on her beam ends, and went out on the great rolling waves. The strain on the girl's muscles as she clung to the tiller was almost unbearable, yet with it came the joy of struggle, and a feeling of triumph as one breaker after another, crashing against the bow, dashed the spray from stem to stern and went seething past. Across the wash of wave and of spray she saw with wonder the look of delight in her companion's eyes, and the brilliant spots of red that stained the pallor of his cheeks. A dull feeling of alarm paralyzed her hands, and the boat swayed and tossed as a great wave struck her almost abeam. When, with straining timbers, the Rocket had righted herself, Frances was horrified to see that the man, with insane exultation, was making ready to run up the jib.

"I cannot hold her," she called quickly. "You must take my place."

He did her bidding, grasping tiller and sheet, and the girl, creeping cautiously

toward the bow, faced the shore and saw that they were heading, in a course that led past the Inn and past the Warren place, toward a point that jutted into the water toward the south. Suddenly she cried aloud: —

"But, Mr. Bevanne — you are mistaken, we need not go! There is Alice running along the rocks."

He looked at her, and for the first time spoke calmly.

"I am not mistaken: I have lied."

"Is n't Alice in danger?"

"I judge not, from what I see."

"Why have you done this thing?"

Her scorn stung him as wind and spray could not sting.

"Because it is the only thing left to do," he said dully. "If we may not live together, we must die together; there is no other way. If we upset, and I pray we may, there will be an end of my misery; that is all."

Even in her moment of supreme danger,

when she saw the reckless motions of his hands, and knew that every inch of the mainsail was spread to this storm wind, pity touched the woman's heart for this man who was as a bit of driftwood in the great tide of passion that carried him whither it would. She knew his purpose now; he had made all ready for the disaster which he knew might any minute come.

Meanwhile, Alice Bevanne was running over the winding shore path toward the Warren house, running as she had never run before, yet with speed that seemed to her but a snail's pace. Wet grass caught at her damp skirts and stayed her steps; scrub-pine and juniper reached out detaining fingers to hold her back. Here was the high rock where Paul Warren and she had sat enthroned as king and queen when she was six years old, with Alec for retainer or for rival monarch, as the occasion demanded, in those sweet hours of stolen play of which nothing was ever said at home; and just

beyond was the cove where, the haughty footsteps of the retreating queen having led her too near the edge, she had fallen into the water, Paul Warren plunging to the rescue. These and myriad other pictures came back to her as the swift feet sped over root and pebble, bringing to the swifter spirit only a nightmare consciousness of standing still.

Near the boathouse in the cove she found Paul Warren, who was examining wharf and shore in order to see what damage had been done by the great storm. He lifted his head and looked at her in amazement, wondering what alarm could so transform the quietest face he knew.

"Mr. Warren," gasped the girl breathlessly, "something is wrong, — there is danger, — you must go out" —

Dumb with wonder, he looked over the waste of water, following the direction in which her finger pointed.

"It is Alec; he is not himself any longer,

and he has taken Miss Wilmot out in the Rocket. I do not understand, but see!"

Out on the water, rocking, sinking, rising again, Paul Warren saw a white rag of sail, forlorn and far as a lost hope.

"In a sea like this!" he cried.

"Go quickly! I will come with you, for you know that I can row. The wind is beating them in toward shore, you see. Alec — Alec does not know what he is doing."

At his side, inspiring, suggesting, calming, the girl worked as one to whom the magic vision has been granted of the one right thing to do. The oars were close at hand in the boathouse; as he pushed out the dory, the woman stepped into the water at his side.

"I dare not let you go!" he panted.

"I dare not stay," she answered.

There was a quick breath on his hand; a head was laid upon it in the old affectionate way of Robin Hood's earlier years. With a joyous bark the dog leaped into the waves

after his master, and, as if the sense of coming danger, working along the delicate nerves of the beast, had at last brought him conviction of something supremely right to be done, he tried to follow, but was driven back by the might of the breakers. Wild with excitement, he ran along the shore, leaping and barking, as the dory fought its way toward the south, cutting across the path of the Rocket, until, plunging in again, he was carried out by a retreating wave, and swam out bravely over the stormy water.

Paul Warren did not see this, nor did he see, in the face of Alice Bevanne, her fierce joy at sharing the danger of the beings whom she loved. Even when she spoke, he hardly heard her, though he mechanically obeyed the voice full of the quiet courage and self-possession of the girl's daily life:—

"Head up a little! You can save her; the Rocket has n't capsized."

An awful energy of passion lent to the

arms of the man a strength as the strength of ten, for, as they met and breasted the waves, rising, gliding over, sinking in the trough of the next, fury such as he had never known descended upon him. It was a moment when all the inheritances of his life met and clashed, and the fire smouldering for generations blazed up all the more fiercely for the protecting ashes that had covered it. To reach this coward and fling him into the sea, to rescue the woman he loved, ridding the earth of the presence of this vile creature before it could again be fit for the tread of her feet, this was the one swelling desire of his heart. He was not thinking, — the tempest within him was too strong for that; but through his mind, borne as dead leaves are borne by a furious gale, were drifting old words, old memories, old pictured scenes. His father's death had come back to him, and, like a cry in his ears, more vivid to sense than the scream of the gulls as they followed the trough of the

waves hunting their prey, came the words which had bade him fight out the Bevanne brood. The elder Bevanne's pitifully weak love-letter came to him as a call to action, for each phrase recalled some look upon the face of the son when his eyes had rested on Frances Wilmot; and Paul Warren cursed himself that he, who had known the strength of the man's hopeless love, had not measured by it the extent of the woman's danger. So old passions hunted like unleashed hounds within his soul, and the memory of love's sweetness and its hope were driven out by elemental fury.

It was no easy task set that day for the strong arms of the man, as he battled with the irresistible might of the sea. Nearer and nearer came the black hull on the water, driven shoreward by the strong east wind, while the dipping white sail more than once seemed to disappear. A thing of nerve and muscle, with no sense save that of vision, Paul Warren strained toward that white rag

whose rising and falling on the waves meant cruel Tantalus hope. Each time he lost it, his heart dragged down as with the weight of chains, down to the depths of the sea, of whose glories this woman had told him with laughter. The memory of her words brought him only pictures of her pale face and tangled hair lying among those dim, rich things of shadowy green and gold.

Now they were near enough to discern clearly the figures in the boat, and as the possibility of rescuing the woman he loved became more strong, the white anger within him burned higher in uncontrollable quiet. Ah, his father had been right, and he, in his ignorance, had not known. Between him and the tossing, careening Rocket, he plainly saw his father's face, and he heard him say: "Young rattlesnakes are as poisonous as old ones." Surely the heel of man was meant to crush out venomous things.

Paul Warren's motions were slower as the supreme moment drew near. Masterfully,

with deep breaths, he took mighty strokes, and the dory crept closer and closer to the wild sailboat as she wallowed to leeward. The eyes of the madman at the helm were fortunately turned away, but Frances Wilmot, facing the greatness of death, yet full of the certainty that wind nor wave could wrest her from her place at the heart of life, looked and saw her lover coming to her over the waves. It was the face of one who felt himself able to wrestle with death itself, and pluck back the life he loved. The girl bent toward him, and her eyes were full of joy that omnipotent love should come to her thus on the tide of the sea.

Then the sea which had wrought her danger offered her a slender chance of safety, for, more through a fortunate accident of wind and wave than by the strength of Paul Warren's arms, the dory touched for a brief moment the side of the Rocket.

"Spring!" cried Paul, and Frances, with a movement too quick for fear, did his

bidding. The appealing touch of the girl's wet hair as the wind blew it across his face tingled through him, and he found the angry ocean less hard to fight than was his desire to take her only for an instant in his arms. Then he saw that Alec Bevanne had turned and was facing him, the blue eyes all alight with anger. A madman's frenzy came upon the man left alone in the Rocket, and with the skilled swiftness of a cat he leaped into the dory, almost capsizing it by his sudden weight. He laid his hand upon Frances Wilmot's golf cape, and his headlong motion betrayed the insane hope of upsetting the boat, dragging her with him to the depths. To Paul Warren came a sudden access of fury that was all compact of strength; in an instant's time he had lifted the slender form of the intruder in his arms, and had flung him into the sea. A horrified cry rose from the two women, and Alice Bevanne's hold upon the oars loosened as she made a swift movement to

follow to her brother's rescue, or to claim his fate.

"Stop!" cried Paul Warren, taking the oars from her. "You cannot help him; there was nothing else to do."

The girl sank upon the bottom of the boat, covering her face with her hands; and Frances, taking the vacant seat, rowed stroke for stroke with Paul, glad that there was no time to realize the full horror of the moment. Back to the cove, over the tossing water, up on the great waves, and down again into the depths, rowed Paul Warren, stern vengeance sitting on his forehead. With fierce passion of which he had never dreamed, he exulted that he had rid the earth of that creature, as he exulted that this woman of all the world was safe, almost safe. A few more strokes, and then —

A great wave dashed them upon the sand of the cove by the Warren house, and with hands that trembled he helped the two drenched figures to alight from the dory.

2

"Go to my mother," he said hoarsely.

But they turned away, and he watched them as they went toward the Inn, trembling as he looked at Frances Wilmot's dark head, then marveling at the light in Alice Bevanne's face. It brought him a dim feeling that this girl's heroic nature had more than expiated the sins of both father and brother, and with this, as he looked out over the waste of waters, came a realization of his own deed.

"I have killed that man," he said simply, as if a mechanical statement of the fact should be offered to the encompassing universe.

He dragged the dory higher on the sand, the strain on his muscles relieving the tension of the mind.

"It had to be done," said Paul Warren sternly, throwing back his head and brushing the wet hair from his forehead; "the lives of two women were at stake."

But something in his heart spoke silently

on as he scanned shore and water to see if perchance some incoming wave might not save the drowning man. It was less the deed than the motive for the deed that was in question. Spent passion left his mind free for his old cruelly ironic sense of things. He, whose impossibly high ideals had kept him from sharing the simplest phases of human life, had exulted in flinging a man to his death. He turned and walked down the storm-strewn shore, watching for some sign that it was not too late to help, full of a sense of tumult, before his eyes a feeling as of darkness unlighted, and in his ears the scream of the sea gulls, which seemed to mingle with the scream of evil things in his soul.

XXIV

"But where is Paul?" asked Mrs. Warren anxiously of Uncle Peter, as the old man brought her her letters at breakfast.

"I don't know," said Uncle Peter. "In bed, I presume."

"No, he must have gone out very early, for I stopped at his room just now to speak to him. I did not see him last night."

"He must be in the city," suggested Uncle Peter.

"But he never goes without telling me."

"Where's Robin Hood?" demanded Uncle Peter suddenly.

Together they waited, lingering long at the table in the hope that Paul might join them, but he did not come. Aunt Belinda appeared as often as possible from the kitchen, torn between a desire to comfort away the

worried look from Mrs. Warren's face, and a determination not to recognize its cause. Uncle Peter chattered amiably of everything he could think of, his nervous cheerfulness increasing the mother's agitation at every word; and then searched house and garden and nearer shore with an incidental air, as if ordered by his doctor to take a zigzag constitutional in every direction. Alone, at the window or on the veranda, stood Mrs. Warren, looking out over the water, which was clearing after the storm, and stretched, incredibly blue, dark, with white foam at its edge, to the clear horizon line, where it lay in hard relief against the pale blue of the sky. It was a day of no gentleness of mood, but of pitiless beauty and of shrill, unheeding wind.

The Sea Gull was riding up and down unhurt upon the waves; the dory was pulled high and dry upon the sand. Of that wild journey out over the storm-tossed sea of yesterday no traces remained, and

neither Mrs. Warren nor Uncle Peter knew of it. Aunt Belinda, however, had watched from the kitchen window the launching of the dory and the strange return with the Southern girl, who had not gone forth with the other two, and she kept her own counsel, with much inarticulate muttering to herself among her pots and pans, aware, with that fine animal sensitiveness of her race, of the unspoken trouble in the air. The three waited in vain for note or telegram which would explain for them Paul's absence; but none came, and with every passing minute of the day the current of foreboding grew more strong. As the afternoon wore on, the color died out of the sea, the life died out of the air, and sky and water stretched away, a dull, gray, leaden waste.

Late in the day the third Andrew Lane, driver at the Emerson Inn, strolled down the road and paused at his grandfather's house, where the old man sat smoking in a splint-bottomed chair tipped comfortably back.

"Folks all right?" asked young Andrew.

Old Andrew grunted assent, and silently held out his pipe to give the visitor a light. They had puffed on speechlessly for several minutes before young Andrew ventured a further remark.

"I see young Warren up the shore this mornin', and I thought he looked kind of queer."

Old Andrew listened sharply, and the wreaths of smoke ceased coming from his mouth.

"Acted like he was half crazy," ventured young Andrew, who was suffering more agitation than he was willing to express, — "went searchin' round behind the rocks and lookin' over the edge as if he 'd lost somethin'."

"Fishin', likely," said the grandfather, nor could the bearer of ill tidings get any further expression of opinion from the old man, who asked a single question in regard to his young master's whereabouts and then

lapsed into smoky silence. It was not until young Andrew had gone home that old Andrew picked up his battered straw hat, refilled his pipe, and ambled down to the Warren house, where he had a long conference with Aunt Belinda.

Another morning dawned on sea and shore with a pallor that was not light; Paul Warren had come home at midnight, wan, distraught, and speechless. At the first glimmer in the east he was up again and away on his search, returning later for a morsel of food, but going out again immediately without explaining his strange conduct. The next day, Mrs. Warren, unable to endure longer the look of silent misery on her son's face, begged Alice Bevanne to tell Frances Wilmot of this mysterious trouble, and she performed her task as she did all others, unflinchingly. The Southern girl listened with a face grown pale as the morning; then the two gazed at each other in silence, eyes and hearts full of the memory of that terrible

moment when the avenger had stood upright in the dory and the head of Alec Bevanne had sunk under the waves.

"Your brother?" asked Frances, with lips that feared the answer.

"He is much better," said Alice, "only still very stiff and bruised; but of course I could not explain to Mrs. Warren, and Mr. Warren, who does not know that Alec came safely home, is not to be found. He must have been searching farther up the coast when Alec was brought to shore by the waves."

Courage had come back to the heart of Frances.

"I will find him," she said simply; "he is somewhere by the sea."

She rose and passed from the Inn, down the slippery path, past the nodding grasses wet with mist, past tangled beds of wild rosebushes, where red haws showed, and here and there a delicate belated rose. Alice Bevanne stood watching her as she went

farther and farther away, her dark hair and white gown breaking the encompassing gray; then turned and went slowly home, alone.

It was a day of the passing of things, as of an Avalon to which life had not come, or to which memories of life past had floated in shapes of mist. Out of the gray the slight waves broke in lines of white; spectral pines stood on near height or far, as at the end of the world. Pale-green willow and tall poplar tree beckoned in the moving fog to the very heart of mystery, and white road and grassy path alike seemed to end in cloud on hill or in hollow. As the girl wandered close by the shore or on the country roads where Paul and she had walked together, eye and ear were strained, but she did not find him. Far or near, the murmur of the ocean came to her, and the answering murmur of the wind in the pines with the immemorial music. Again and again the mist half lifted over a sea of pearly blue, then closed in again, floating,

breaking, — a soft, palpable grayness everywhere.

Once, as the mist parted, before her on the wet sand she saw stretched out the lifeless form of Robin Hood, — one paw flung across his eyes as the careless tide had left him there; she bent and patted the brave dark head.

But she could not stay, and went on searching by rocky bluff and sheltered cove, the fog again inclosing her, swift as the falling of a veil. The old paths were gone; familiar landmarks of pine and of cedar were wiped away as by obliterating fingers; and she stopped with a sudden sense of hopeless weariness. Passion had died out of the sea, and there was nothing left but its gray moan.

Then the will of the woman rose above the will of sky and of sea: somewhere he was waiting for her, — of that her assurance was perfect. Somewhere he was listening for her voice which he so loved; her voice

should find him. Across the mist she sent it, the cry of the bird to its wounded mate. It broke into her song of the tide, and as it quivered on the air, it seemed to glow with golden light and color, and to break into iridescent beauty against the gray. Passion and love and faith were set free in the wonderful notes, high and low; the dropping of human tears was there, ripples of human laughter, and the supreme joy that touches pain. Far off across the mist the man heard it, and knew this woman's deep sense of the melody at the heart of things, beneath the discord and the strife and sin, and he waited, the notes falling on his ear as cool drops of rain might fall on parched lips dying of thirst. She found him at last, exhausted by his fruitless search, leaning against a sheer wall of rock with the white quiet of despair on his face. As she came toward him with outstretched hands, her song died on her lips, for he shrank away.

"Don't touch me," he said sternly.

She paid no heed, but with her old smile drew him to a seat on the rocks, and half fearfully touched the disordered hair on his forehead, then laid cool fingers on his eyelids, closing them over the tired eyes.

"Frances, I have sent a man to his death," he said brokenly.

"Mr. Bevanne came safely home," she whispered.

Something like a sob broke from him, and the pale lips quivered.

"I am unspeakably glad for Alice and for her mother, but it does not alter what I did, or tried to do."

She broke into her song again, and the man at her side, with closed eyes, drank it thirstily in; then, watching the changing expression on his face, she seized her moment and said coaxingly: —

"Come home! What do you mean by frightening us all nearly to death? I have been waiting and waiting for you."

"I did not realize — anything," he said hoarsely. "I was searching, at first, for Bevanne. Frances, it is all true, all the old fear that darkened my boyhood, of hands waiting in the dark, clutching you out of the past, making you do their will."

"It is not true," said the woman bravely, and, drawing nearer, she kissed his eyes and his brow with indescribable tenderness.

"That passion like that could master one unaware!"

She broke the tragic measure of his voice with a little light, joyous laugh.

"All that you needed to make you perfect was a little primitive passion!"

He stretched out a warning hand to ward her off, and paused, gazing at her with steady eyes.

"I shall never claim you, beloved, for I am not fit. There is nothing in human life but failure and misery and despair. It is only a pitfall set for our feet."

Her soft hand lay across his eyes as she whispered: —

"There is nothing anywhere but love!"

"Ah, but you were afraid before," he said.

"That was long ago," she whispered, "before I knew."

"But you don't understand," said the man's voice, breaking. "In that moment I did not know what I was doing, and I committed a crime. Think how awful the possibilities of things are! To all intents I killed that man, and, dear, it might be you."

With a sudden fierce sense of pity and of possession she drew his head to her bosom.

"Then I should say, as Sir Gawaine said of Lancelot, 'Of a more nobler man might I not be slain.'"

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